

THE NAVY UNDER CHARLES I
1625-40

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ABSTRACT

This study is primarily concerned with how the Caroline Navy was run, both in theory and in practice. Previous assessments of early Stuart naval administration have generally been superficial and unsympathetic in tone, but this new work, in shedding fresh light on a variety of themes, attempts to offer a more detailed and balanced view of the quality of administration in the 1620s and 1630s.

Starting with an examination of the Navy's senior executive, the thesis broadens out into a discussion of the role of the Navy Board and the manner in which the yards were administered. Here it is argued that the yards were a good deal better regulated than has sometimes been appreciated. It is also suggested that the Navy's ability to reform its own administration has been understated. In the second part of the thesis, two chapters are devoted to the question of finance, in which both financial procedures and management are discussed.

In the final section, the Navy's ability to man, victual and prepare its ships for sea is scrutinised. Detailed consideration is also given to the Ordnance Office, which was responsible for gunning and munitioning the Navy's ships. In these later chapters considerable space is devoted to administrative deficiencies which persistently dogged the Navy, but the author argues that institutional factors, such as underfunding, were often to blame rather than mismanagement, a theme which is echoed in the final conclusion.

PREFACE

In the process of writing this thesis I have incurred many debts of gratitude. I owe most thanks to my supervisor, Professor Conrad Russell, whose generosity with his time frequently exceeded the call of duty, and whose keen eye and sharp mind saved me from innumerable errors of judgement. I owe scarcely less thanks to Mr. Roger Lockyer, who initially stimulated my interest in the early Stuart Navy while I was an undergraduate. Mr. Lockyer read the whole of the second draft, and made many perceptive observations which have served to improve the quality of the text. In addition, I should like to thank Dr. Roger Morriss of the National Maritime Museum for his comments upon Chapter 3, Mrs. Sabrina Baron for her observations on an early draft of Chapter 1, and Dr. David Hebb for many invaluable discussions at the outset of my research.

As far as archives are concerned, I am deeply indebted to the Duke of Northumberland for permission to examine the Northumberland papers, and to Lord Fairfax of Cameron for allowing me to consult the Duchess of Buckingham's MSS. In addition, I am grateful to the staff of the Berkshire Record Office, the Birmingham Reference Library, the Bodleian Library, the British Library, the Clwyd Record Office, the Derbyshire Record Office, the Devon Record Office, the Dyfed Archives Service, the Hampshire Record Office, the Glamorgan Record Office, the House of Lords Record Office, the Kent Archives Office, the National Library of Scotland, the National Maritime Museum, the Public Record Office, the Scottish Record Office, the Society of Antiquaries, the University of London, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the West Sussex Record Office.

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Throughout the text I have kept to the original spelling of quotations, but have lengthened abbreviations and added punctuation where necessary. Dates are given in the Old Style, but the year is taken as beginning on 1 January.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.P.C.	Acts of the Privy Council
B.R.L.	Birmingham Reference Library
Bodl. Libr.	Bodleian Library
Brit. Libr.	British Library
C.S.P.D.	Calendar of State Papers, Domestic
C.S.P.I.	Calendar of State Papers, Ireland
C.S.P.V.	Calendar of State Papers, Venetian
D.N.B.	Dictionary of National Biography
Derb. R.O.	Derbyshire Record Office
H.M.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission
K.A.O.	Kent Archives Office
Longleat	Longleat House
N.M.M.	National Maritime Museum
N.R.S.	Navy Records Society
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
R.P.C.S.	Register of the Privy Council of Scotland
Scot. R.O.	Scottish Record Office
T.H.D.T.	<i>Trinity House of Deptford Transactions, 1609-35</i> , ed. G.G. Harris, London Record Society, xix, (1983).
W.S.R.O.	West Sussex Record Office

INTRODUCTION

The Navy inherited by Charles I in March 1625 was in better shape than it had been for many years. Following the end of the Elizabethan war with Spain in 1604 it had been allowed to decay under the benevolent auspices of the aged Lord High Admiral, Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham. Robert Kenny, in a vivid phrase, has said that Nottingham's subordinates on the Navy Board 'made the navy a fat, lifeless, supine organism which seemed to exist to be ravaged and robbed by its own personnel'.¹ However, following a damning report compiled in 1618, the Board was suspended and a twelve-man Navy Commission was appointed in its place. In their task of reform the Commissioners were encouraged by the new and youthful Lord High Admiral, George Villiers, Marquis (later Duke) of Buckingham, who replaced Nottingham in January 1619. Over the next five years the Commissioners put the Navy's finances on a sound footing. They also disposed of a number of old ships and built ten new vessels in their place. The results were, by contemporary standards, highly impressive. By the accession of Charles I, the royal fleet consisted of twenty-five seaworthy capital ships and a handful of pinnaces.² This strength, remarked Sir John Coke, the leading Commissioner who was then in his sixties, was 'better then ever it was in my memorie and exceeded the Navies of former times'.³ His observation was echoed by an anonymous tract writer in 1628, who commented that 'the shipping of England is at this present much more greater, and more warliker then it hath beene in any former age'. However, this same writer was

1 Robert W. Kenny, *Elizabeth's Admiral: The Political Career of Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham, 1536-1624* (Baltimore & London, 1970), p.293.

2 P.R.O., S[tate] P[ap]ers 16/13/59, fleet list, n.d., (1625-6). This figure excludes the *White Bear*, which was unserviceable: Brit. Libr., Add[itional] MS. 64884 fo.59.

3 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64889, fo.155v, Sept. 1626, (draft).

undoubtedly exaggerating when he added that Charles I possessed 'the most powerful navy that any king hath in Christendome', for the Spanish fleet was considerably larger than its Caroline counterpart.⁴ Nevertheless, Spain's overseas empire meant that her naval strength was dissipated around the globe, unlike England's, which was concentrated exclusively in home waters. In 1626 Secretary of State Sir Edward Conway at least believed that this fact made it 'faisible for us to keep the seas against them'.⁵

Under Charles I the newly refashioned English Navy was soon put to use. In October 1625 a large fleet was despatched under the command of the experienced soldier Sir Edward Cecil with the aim of striking a blow against Spain. However, Cecil's attempt to emulate the Earl of Essex's feat in 1596 of seizing Cadiz ended in ignominious failure. The following year a fresh fleet was set out under Lord Willoughby. This time the ships got no further than the Bay of Biscay before fierce storms forced them to return home. The fault was laid at the door of the Navy's administration, and a Special Commission was briefly established to investigate the activities of the Navy Commissioners.

No further expeditions were mounted against Spain after 1626, although the war continued until December 1630. The bulk of England's naval effort was instead diverted into a fresh conflict with France, which lasted until April 1629. In July 1627 Buckingham led a combined expedition to the Ile de Ré to assist the Huguenots of La Rochelle. However, he was forced to withdraw in November, and part of the blame for this defeat was laid on the Navy Commissioners for failing to keep him supplied. They were dismissed in

4 Longleat, Coventry MS. vol. 117 fo.25. The anonymous author's choice of words excluded from comparison the Navy of the republican Dutch, which was also larger than England's.

5 P.R.O., SP78/80 fo.71, 6 Oct. 1626, 'Considerations touching France'.

February 1628 and the Navy Board was restored.

Undeterred by the failure of the Ré expedition, Buckingham and Charles continued their efforts to break Louis XIII's blockade of La Rochelle. A poorly equipped expedition under the Earl of Denbigh was duly despatched from England in April 1628, only to return the following month having accomplished nothing. The main reason for this lay not in the weakness of Denbigh's ships, but in the strength of the French defences, which were impregnable to naval assault.⁶ Instead of persuading Charles and Buckingham to give up, however, Denbigh's return simply led them to redouble their efforts. A second fleet, larger and better equipped than Denbigh's as a result of loans secured on the credit of fresh parliamentary subsidies, was consequently set out in September under Willoughby, who had recently been made Earl of Lindsey. This met with no better success, however, and the fall of La Rochelle in October meant that the English opened the way to the conclusion of peace with France in 1629.

Following the murder of Buckingham in August 1628, the King chose not to appoint a new Lord High Admiral, but to place the office in commission. Until his death in 1635, the most prominent member of the new Commission was the Lord Treasurer, Richard Weston, Earl of Portland. Over the next few years, and in particular after the cessation of hostilities with Spain, Portland set about retrenching government expenditure, thereby limiting the scope of naval operations. However, Portland did find the money to pay for a fresh building programme, for between 1632 and 1637 eleven new ships and pinnaces were added to the Navy. The Admiralty Commission lasted until 1638, when Charles decided to appoint the youthful Algernon Percy, tenth

6 P.R.O., SP16/103/50, 8 May 1628, Sir Henry Palmer to Edward Nicholas;
SP16/102/57, 9 May 1628, Denbigh to Buckingham.

Earl of Northumberland, as Lord High Admiral in its place.

Despite the financial constraints imposed by Portland, it soon became clear that the end of the wars with Spain and France had not diminished the need for a strong naval presence in the Channel. As early as 1626 Richelieu had begun to assemble a powerful Navy almost from scratch, and by the early 1630s intelligence reports indicated that this was nearly as large as the entire English fleet.⁷ Moreover, England's wartime alliance with the United Provinces gave way in the 1630s to a sense of distrust. The Dutch were the greatest naval power in western Europe, but they were also important trade rivals who showed little respect for English claims to sovereignty of the Channel.⁸ England's maritime trade was also impaired by the activities of pirates, many of whom operated from north Africa. Each of these problems served to contradict Portland's policy of financial retrenchment. However, it was unthinkable that the enormous cost of increasing the size of the small Channel squadron should be borne by the ordinary royal revenue, which barely covered normal administrative costs. Nor was there any possibility of obtaining a parliamentary grant, for the King's relations with his parliaments had deteriorated to such an extent that in the 1630s he ruled without them. For these reasons, Charles decided in 1634 to levy a special financial rate known as Ship Money on the maritime counties of England and Wales. Initially, this proved so successful that the following year the levy was broadened to include the inland shires as well.

The fleets of 1635-40 were much smaller than those which had been set out by Buckingham. The largest of the Ship Money fleets, that of 1638,

7 P.R.O., SP78/86 fos.131-3, anon., Feb. 1630; P.R.O., SP16/166/33, 7 May 1630, list compiled by Capt. Dymes; SP16/198/84, anon., [Aug.?] 1631; SP16/218/59.1, 6 June 1632, Capt. Carteret's report.

8 For a list of the Dutch Navy in 1631, see P.R.O., SP84/149 fos. 65-79v.

consisted of twenty-nine warships and one small pink. By comparison, the fleet which accompanied Buckingham to Ré comprised ninety-six vessels of all sizes.⁹ However, the Ship Money fleets were generally more powerful than those of the 1620s. Most of the vessels which served in the fleets of the 1630s were purpose-built warships which belonged to the King, whereas the majority of the ships in Buckingham's fleets had been armed merchantmen pressed into naval service. Only nine King's ships of above 250 tons served in the Cadiz expedition, for instance, whereas the Fourth Ship Money Fleet included fifteen.¹⁰

Contemporary assessments of the role performed by the Ship Money fleets were varied. Some of the senior officers felt frustrated that their expectation of active service had been disappointed. In 1635 it was hoped to confront the French fleet and force it to salute the English flag. However, the French admiral carefully ensured that the two fleets never met. In a letter to his friend the Admiralty Secretary, Admiral John Pennington confided that he hoped the fleet would achieve something more substantial the following year, for otherwise 'the money were as well saft as spent'.¹¹ A similar sentiment was expressed by Northumberland, who commanded the fleet in 1636. The only tangible result yielded that summer was the sale of fishing licences to the Dutch worth a paltry £501.¹² In view of such apparently profitless activity, Northumberland was uncertain the following spring whether he really wanted to be reappointed as the fleet's commander, for 'if the King have not more use of his Fleet than is

9 For the 1638 fleet, see Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.187. The *Sovereign of the Seas* appears in this list, but she did not see service. For the 1627 list, see P.R.O., SP16/70/26.

10 For the 1625 fleet list, see J. Glanville, *The Voyage to Cadiz in 1625*, ed. A.B. Grosart (Camden Soc., 1883), pp.125-7.

11 P.R.O., SP16/295/18, 3 Aug. 1635, Pennington to Nicholas.

12 P.R.O., SP16/343/72.

yet known, he may save one half of the Charge, and give me leave to stay at home'.¹³ Even after he had accepted command the Earl remained unenthusiastic, predicting that he would be forced 'to ride in this place at Anchor a whole Summer together without Hope of Action'.¹⁴ He was not to be proved far wrong, for the only ships which fired their guns in anger that year were a squadron under William Rainsborough, which successfully suppressed the pirates of Sallee.¹⁵

Not everyone was as disappointed in the Ship Money fleets as Northumberland and Pennington. Writing to his political masters in 1636, the Tuscan ambassador, Salvetti, observed that it was 'a great point' for the King to be able to put to sea a large fleet each year 'without touching a halfpenny of his revenue', adding that it was 'a business of great consequence and reputation, but little to the taste of our neighbours'.¹⁶ These sentiments were echoed by the assistant English ambassador in Paris, Sir Kenelm Digby, who observed that 'although my lord of Lindsey do no more then saile up and downe, yet the viry setting of our last fleete out to sea is the greatest service that I believe hath bin done the king these many yeares'.¹⁷ Clearly, the relative inactivity of the fleet mattered less than its physical presence in the Channel.

However, England's reputation as a maritime power was not all that was at

13 *The Earl of Strafforde's Letters and Dispatches* ed. William Knowler, (2 vols., London, 1739), II. 71, 28 April 1637, Northumberland to Wentworth.

14 *Ibid.*, p.84, 15 July 1637, Northumberland to Wentworth.

15 For the Sallee expedition, & a detailed account of the government's response to north African piracy in the early seventeenth century, see D.D. Hebb, 'The English Government and the Problem of Piracy, 1616-1642', (unpublished London Ph.D., 1985).

16 Quoted in M.D. Gordon, 'The Collection of Ship Money in the Reign of Charles I', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, (3rd series, vol. IV, 1910), p.145.

17 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64910 fo.104v, 29 Sept. 1635, Digby to Coke.

stake. Dr. Hebb has suggested that the government attempted to use the fleet to maintain the balance of power between two warring parties, comprising Spain on the one hand, and France and the United Provinces on the other.¹⁸ There is some truth in this, but as Prof. Hibbard has pointed out, the fundamental objective, which was never realised, was the restoration of the Palatinate to its dispossessed Elector.¹⁹ To this end, Charles threatened to assist either Spain or its enemies. Writing in July 1635 to England's extraordinary ambassador in Venice, Secretary of State Sir Francis Windebank sought to remind the Spaniards of 'the benefit the King of Spaine hath had by his Majestties arming at sea this yeere', for 'by this meanes the coast of Flanders, which the Hollanders before boasted they held and besieged, ...[has] been freed and preserved nearly by this action of the King'.²⁰ Later, Windebank observed that unless Spain's ally, the Holy Roman Emperor, installed the late Elector's heir as Prince Palatine, 'his Majestties more powerfull fleete, which he intendes to sett out the next yeere...may verify their opinion that it shalbe indeed for his owne interests and those of his nephew, and least of all (I hope) for theirs'.²¹ The seriousness with which this threat was intended may be gauged by the fact that as late as June 1637 the King was evidently prepared to go to war with Spain over the Palatinate if he could secure favourable terms of alliance with the French.²²

18 Hebb, 'The Problem of Piracy', pp.295-7.

19 Caroline M. Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot* (University of North Carolina, 1983), pp.27-9.

20 H.M.C. *6th Rept.* app., pt. 1. 278, 31 July 1635, Windebank to Lord Fielding.

21 *Ibid.*, p.279, 23 Nov. 1635, Windebank to [Fielding?].

22 P.R.O., SP16/361/65, 12 June 1637, Coke to Northumberland; SP16/361/113, 17 June 1637, Charles I to Council of War; SP16/362/30, 22 June 1637, Coke to Conway; SP16/362/76, 29 June 1637, newsletter by C. Rossingham. For discussion of the proposed French alliance, see Hibbard, *The Popish Plot*, pp.72-5.

In the event, the Navy was obliged to wait until 1639 before it was presented with any real opportunities for action. The rebellion of the Scottish Covenanters in 1638 led Charles to detail a powerful squadron to blockade Edinburgh and Aberdeen the following year. During the spring and early summer of 1639 the English ships snapped up Scottish merchant vessels with impunity.²³ However, this operation was cut short when it was learned that English vessels in Spanish service were being searched by Dutch ships in the Channel. Most of the blockading warships were therefore sent to reinforce the small Channel squadron. Soon the English ships were faced with the possibility of participating in a major naval battle, for in September the Dutch destroyed the main Spanish fleet in the Downs. However, although Charles I was now more disposed to support Spain than the United Provinces, the English force at sea was smaller than previous Ship Money fleets. Its commander, Admiral Pennington, wisely decided against intervening in support of the Spaniards.²⁴

The humiliation of the Battle of the Downs was, for the King at least, compounded in 1641 when the Long Parliament forced the government to abolish Ship Money. Ship Money had been a strikingly successful financial device, but it had never been popular, for it had been raised without parliamentary consent. The final blow to Charles' naval pretensions, however, was delivered shortly before the outbreak of civil war, in July 1642, when the fleet in the Downs chose to side with its new parliamentary

23 P.R.O., SP16/421/128, 22 May 1639, Pennington to Capt. Carteret; SP16/423/24, 71, 4 & 10 June 1639 respectively, Capt. Hill to Pennington.

24 The reason for the small size of the English squadron was financial. The Ship Money writs sent out in 1638 for 1639 demanded only one third of previous assessments: P.R.O., SP16/401/75, 14 Nov. 1638, 14 Nov. 1638, Nicholas to Pennington. This was probably because the government was anxious not to over-burden those counties which had also to raise coat & conduct money for the troops levied to fight the Scots.

paymasters against the King.

* * * * *

The preceding narrative is generally familiar to anyone acquainted with early Stuart history. Yet there is no modern, authoritative study of the Caroline Navy. The prevailing view in academic circles appears to be that such an inglorious period of English naval history scarcely merits serious consideration. Even among those who have turned their attention to it, there is evidence of an extraordinary ambivalence in attitude. Christopher Lloyd's book on the history of the British seaman is a case in point. On the one hand Lloyd devotes a whole chapter to the early Stuart period, yet on the other he is content to describe the twenty years after Buckingham's assassination as being, 'from the naval point of view, a blank'.²⁵

A previous generation of scholars, however, was not so dismissive of the Navy during this period. The narrative outline was sketched out in detail by C.D. Penn in 1920 in a book devoted solely to the early Stuart Navy, and by G.E. Manwaring, in a biography of the former pirate and naval official Sir Henry Mainwaring.²⁶ Pioneering work on the administration had been published even earlier, in the form of Michael Oppenheim's well known 1896 monograph on the Navy between 1509 and 1660.²⁷ Justifiably admired for its breadth, Oppenheim's work is nevertheless in need of replacement. One reason for this is that Oppenheim was insufficiently acquainted with the source material, for as a medical doctor his historical interests were strictly a side-line affair. In addition, documents are accessible to the

25 C. Lloyd, *The British Seaman, 1200-1860*, (London, 1968), p.52.

26 C.D. Penn, *The Navy under the Early Stuarts and its influence on English History*, (London, 1920); G.E. Manwaring, *The Life and Works of Sir Henry Mainwaring*, N.R.S., 2 vols., liv & lvi, (1920-1). The 2nd volume by Manwaring is a book of documents, & was co-edited with W.G. Perrin.

27 M. Oppenheim, *A History of the Administration of the Royal Navy and of Merchant Shipping in Relation to the Navy*, (London & New York, 1896).

modern scholar which were not available in the 1890s.

In the short term, Oppenheim's work may have acted as a spur for further research on administration. Between 1921 and 1924 Isobel Powell published five useful articles, covering themes such as the management of the Chatham Chest and administrative attempts to clothe the Navy's seamen.²⁸ Further work was carried out in 1926 by W.G. Perrin, who shed light on the establishment of the Admiralty Commission.²⁹ However, the revival of interest in the early Stuart Navy soon petered out, for little has been published on the subject since the 1920s. In 1945 the *Mariner's Mirror* printed a helpful article by W.R. Chaplin on the captains who served under William Rainsborough during the Sallee expedition of 1637.³⁰ Twelve years later two articles appeared in print, one by Professor Robert Ashton, which examined the financial activities of the Navy Treasurer Sir William Russell, and the other by Professor Gerald Aylmer, which surveyed the Navy's administration between 1625 and 1642, reinforcing and developing the arguments first articulated by Oppenheim.³¹ Yet the simultaneous appearance of Ashton's and Aylmer's articles did not signal a renaissance in early Stuart naval history. On the contrary, during the 1960s and 1970s there was no new published work on the topic, with the exception of Dr. McGowan's

28 Isobel G. Powell, 'Seventeenth Century "Profiteering" in the Royal Navy', *Mariner's Mirror*, vii (1921); 'The Chatham Chest under the Early Stuarts', *Mariner's Mirror*, viii (1922); 'The Early Naval Lieutenant', & 'Early Ship Surgeons', *Mariner's Mirror*, ix (1923); '"Shipkeepers" and Minor Officers serving at sea in the Early Stuart Navy', *Mariner's Mirror*, x (1924).

29 W.G. Perrin, 'The Lord High Admiral and the Board of Admiralty', *Mariner's Mirror*, xii (1926).

30 W.R. Chaplin, 'William Rainsborough (1587-1642) and His Associates of the Trinity House', *Mariner's Mirror*, xxxi (1945).

31 Robert Ashton, 'The Disbursing Official under the Early Stuarts: The Cases of Sir William Russell and Philip Burlamachi', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxx (1957); G.E. Aylmer, 'Attempts at Administrative Reform, 1625-40', *English Historical Review*, lxxii (1957).

volume of documents relating to the Commissions of Enquiry into the Navy of 1608 and 1618.³²

In recent years the fortunes of naval history generally have shown signs of a revival.³³ However, this renewed interest in the Navy has not yet encompassed the early seventeenth century. Although the 1980s witnessed the appearance of good biographies of two of the key naval figures of the age, the Duke of Buckingham and Sir John Coke, the only published writing to deal exclusively with the Navy is an article by Dr. Quintrell, which examines Charles I's relations with the fleet in the 1630s.³⁴ It is therefore scarcely surprising that Dr. Rodger has recently remarked that 'we still need more work...on the early Stuart navy'.³⁵

To some extent this gap is bridged by the unpublished London doctoral dissertation of Dr. Alan McGowan.³⁶ Written in 1967, Dr. McGowan's thesis deals with the Navy under Buckingham between 1618 and 1628. However, although it is studded with gems, McGowan's work is based on only a limited range of primary sources. The section on the Ordnance Office makes no reference to the War Office records in the Public Record Office. The chapter on finance, too, suggests that the author is unfamiliar with Exchequer records beyond the Navy's Declared Accounts. Most importantly, McGowan drew only very lightly on the vast body of naval correspondence

32 *The Jacobean Commissions of Enquiry, 1608 and 1618*, ed. A.P. McGowan, N.R.S. cxvi (1971).

33 N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*, (London, 1986); Bernard Capp, *Cromwell's Navy: The Fleet and the English Revolution, 1648-1660*, (Oxford, 1989).

34 Roger Lockyer, *Buckingham: The Life and Political Career of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, 1592-1628*, (London & New York, 1981); Michael B. Young, *Servility and Service: The Life and Work of Sir John Coke*, (Exeter, 1986); Brian Quintrell, 'Charles I and his Navy in the 1630s', *The Seventeenth Century*, iii (1988).

35 N.A.M. Rodger, 'Conditions at Sea', *Times Lit. Supplement*, 29 Dec. 1989.

36 A.P. McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under the first Duke of Buckingham, Lord High Admiral, 1618-1628', (London Ph.D., 1967).

among the State Papers and elsewhere. The result is that his examination of naval administration often remains at the theoretical level.³⁷ This approach to the sources is rather like trying to gauge the efficiency of British Rail from the evidence of its timetables.

There is, then, enormous scope for a fresh survey of the Caroline Navy, particularly of its administration. This thesis seeks to provide just such a study, although regrettably it is not fully comprehensive. Lack of space has meant that it has not been possible to include chapters on the quality of Admiralty administration or on office-holding, although the financial aspects of the latter subject are dealt with extensively in chapter five. Nor is there a discussion of the Navy's timber problem, although I hope to remedy this deficiency in article form at a future date. For the moment, readers are advised to refer to the works of Albion and Hammersley.³⁸ Nevertheless, the eight chapters which follow cover much of the remaining ground in detail. The main emphasis throughout is on the central problem of administrative efficiency. However, two chapters deviate from this theme. Chapter one is dominated by the question 'who ran the Navy?', while chapter three looks at how the Navy was financed.

Any study of naval administration raises problems of methodology. The approach I have adopted is to cut across the narrative by looking at problems such as manning and victualling in isolation. This has the advantage of affording a thorough thematic treatment which allows the writer to document change over time, but it has the disadvantage of forcing the reader to look at each issue without detailed reference to any of the

37 E.g. Chapter 7, 'Shipbuilding and the Administration of the Dockyards'.

38 R.G. Albion, *Forests and Seapower: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy, 1652-1862* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926); G. Hammersley, 'The Crown Woods and their Exploitation in the 16th and 17th Centuries', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxx (1957).

others. An alternative approach would have been to study the Navy's administration through some of the large naval operations of the period, thereby avoiding the artificial separation of problems. However, the danger of the case study is that it offers only a glimpse of the administration at work at a given moment; it does not easily lend itself to the crucial question of change. The thematic approach would therefore seem to be the lesser of two evils.

The methodological problems which confront the historian of the Caroline Navy are as nothing, however, compared with the archival difficulties. On the face of it there are more than enough documents available from which to write an administrative study. Among the State Papers alone there are thousands of items of correspondence relating to the Navy. However, with the exception of a mass of financial documents, the bulk of the surviving archive is classifiable either as Admiralty papers or as correspondence relating to one or other of the Secretaries of State. There are very few letters between the Navy Board and yard officials and almost none at all between the Victualler and his employees. The only extant body of Navy Board correspondence not addressed to the Admiralty concerns the Trinity House of Deptford.³⁹ Most of the Navy Board's internal papers have also disappeared, including the Clerk of the Navy's notes of Board meetings, as have the ship muster books and paybooks kept by the Board. The victualling department is equally badly documented. None of the agreements with its suppliers exists, while only a handful of purser's accounts have managed to find their way into the archive. The only surviving record to shed a

39 These, & other Trinity House papers, have been edited by G.G. Harris as *Trinity House of Deptford Transactions, 1609-35*, London Record Society, xix (1983).

significant amount of light on the internal affairs of any of the departments connected with the Navy is a large notebook relating to the Ordnance Office.⁴⁰ This exceptionally detailed source, which covers the period 1626-37, has been overlooked by everyone except Cleere and Crossley, who used it in their recent study of the Kentish iron industry.⁴¹

The incomplete nature of the archive is even more apparent when it is realised that there are some gaping holes in the Admiralty sources as well. The first gap occurs between 1628 and 1632. Edward Nicholas, Buckingham's Admiralty Secretary, kept a detailed record of all the letters written by the Duke on naval affairs. Two volumes covering the period 1625 to 1627 were bought by the British Library at auction in 1909.⁴² However, the letter book for 1628 has disappeared. So too has the Admiralty Commissioners' out-letter book for 1628 to 1632, although a list of its contents and a few of the original out-letters survive.⁴³ An even more serious gap in the Admiralty archive occurs with the appointment of Northumberland as Lord High Admiral in 1638. Some of the letters written by the Earl's Admiralty Secretary, Thomas Smith, survive among the State Papers. However, although the Northumberland MSS. in Alnwick Castle and Petworth House contain some Navy papers, they represent only a slender fragment of what must once have existed. Whereas it is possible to follow the activities of Buckingham as Lord High Admiral on almost a daily basis for a full three years, it is impossible to do the same for Northumberland

40 Brit. Libr., Harl[ei]an MS. 429.

41 Henry Cleere & David Crossley, *The Iron Industry of the Weald*, (Leicester, 1985).

42 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816-7.

43 For the contents listing, see P.R.O., SP16/156. Each letter is briefly described, & they would all seem to be in chronological order, although no dates are given.

44 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fos.347,349,353,357,359-62v,365,378.

for even one week. The only shaft of light to relieve the archival gloom of the later 1630s is cast by a volume of MSS. in the British Library, which contains a rare clutch of papers relating to the Navy Board's internal affairs between September and December 1639.⁴⁴

The Admiralty archive is further weakened because much of the correspondence which must have been addressed to individual Admiralty Commissioners between 1628 and 1638 has gone astray. The disappearance of the papers of Lord Treasurer Portland in particular is a grievous loss.⁴⁵ The exception to this rule are the papers of Sir John Coke, who was appointed to the Commission at its inception in 1628.⁴⁶ Coke's naval papers, however, are richer for the period before 1628, when he was a Navy Commissioner, than they are for the 1630s.

The holes in the Navy's archive suggest that perhaps as little as a quarter of the manuscripts which once existed have, as yet, come to light. Nevertheless, a seriously depleted archive is not necessarily an unfruitful one, as I hope to demonstrate in the following pages.

45 However, 3 naval MSS. exist among the hitherto unknown papers of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Cottington, in the Society of Antiquaries (MS.203). All 3 documents were addressed to Cottington before he was added to the Admiralty Commission in Dec. 1632. The Cottington MSS. consist of just half a volume. They are bound up with the papers of an English merchant of the 1650s named Meredith. Cottington died a royalist exile in Spain, where Meredith probably acquired this fraction of his papers.

46 Until 1987 the Coke MSS. were owned by the Marquis of Lothian, & kept at Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire. They have now been bought by the British Library. However, not all the Coke papers are yet available for inspection. Those papers listed by the H.M.C. (appendix, *12th Rept.*, parts 1 & 2) have now been incorporated into the British Library's Additional MSS, & these are consequently referred to below by their new numbers. The rest of the Coke papers comprise those documents which escaped inclusion in the appendix to the H.M.C. *12th Report*, & are as yet unavailable. These are therefore referred to here by the old numbers given to them by the Derbyshire Record Office.

PART ONE

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NAVY

Chapter 1

THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE

The Paymaster of the Navy, John Hollond, once declared that the government of the Navy was 'not unlike a great wood, wherein one may sooner lose himself than find another'.¹ Hollond was referring specifically to the Navy Board, but he might just as well have been talking more generally. In the early seventeenth century it was not always clear where power lay in the Navy, for there were few written rules governing the matter. Real power depended as much on political strength and force of personality as it did on institutions and office, and because of this its most remarkable feature was its fluidity.²

I. The King

Before 1642, ultimate authority over the Navy resided in the King. This did not mean that he was involved in making every decision, for this would have been impossible as well as undesirable. Nevertheless there were certain things which required the King's direct authorisation. For instance, naval vessels were the King's property and, as such, neither the Admiralty nor the Privy Council could order the sale of unseaworthy warships without his permission. Thus, a Council discussion in 1639 about the disposal of two warships was conducted in the royal presence.³ Similarly, only the King could authorise the construction of

1 *Hollond's Discourses of the Navy, 1638 and 1658*, ed. J.R. Tanner N.R.S., vii (1896), p.11.

2 The point has been made specifically in regard to the functions of the 2 Secretaries of State by G.E. Aylmer in *The King's Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I, 1625-1642* (London & Boston, Mass., 1974), p.18.

3 P.R.O., [Privy] Council 2/50, p.665.

new ships. The order normally percolated down the chain of command, but on one occasion the King bypassed this formal process altogether. At Woolwich in June 1634 Charles I revealed for the first time his decision to build the largest warship the Navy had ever seen, the *Sovereign of the Seas*. The shipwright Phineas Pett recorded that Charles took him aside and 'privately acquainted me with his princely resolution'.⁴

Until July 1642, the undisputed right to appoint a new Lord Admiral lay with the King. Nevertheless, for a brief period beginning in December 1629 and ending in January 1630, it seemed to many that the King was amenable to manipulation. Following the assassination in August 1628 of the Duke of Buckingham, the Admiralty had been placed in commission.⁵ However, owing to an alarming increase in French naval activity it was widely believed that the King would shortly choose a new Lord Admiral. Two major factions therefore endeavoured to promote their candidates for the post. The first was sympathetic to France. Most notably it enjoyed the support of the French Ambassador, Chateauneuf, who hoped to install a francophile as Lord Admiral. The second group was hostile to the French. Among its leading lights was James Hay, Earl of Carlisle. The respective nominees of the two factions for the Admiralty were Henry Rich, Earl of Holland, and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. The in-fighting between the two groups rapidly focussed on the Queen's Bedchamber. Convinced of the need to enlist the support of the Queen, who had assumed a major political importance since Buckingham's death,

4 *The Autobiography of Phineas Pett*, ed. W.G. Perrin, N.R.S., 11 (1918), pp.156-7.

5 Six Commissioners were appointed on 28 Sept. 1628: Lord Treasurer Portland, the Earl of Pembroke (Lord Steward), the Earl of Lindsey (Lord Great Chamberlain), the Earl of Dorset (Queen's Chamberlain), Visc. Dorchester (Vice-Chamberlain & Sec. of State) & Sir John Coke (Sec. of State): P.R.O., H[igh] C[ourt of] A[dmiralty] 50/2, pp.1-5.

and anxious to prevent her from siding with the rival faction, Chateauneuf poisoned the friendship between Henrietta Maria and her closest *confidante*, the Countess of Carlisle. In retaliation, the Countess' husband spoke 'very freely' in a subsequent meeting of the Privy Council, 'pointing out that while they are thinking of making an admiral because of their mistrust of France it was not good policy to leave the choice to the French ambassador'.⁶

The struggle between Holland and Carlisle for control of the Admiralty is chiefly remarkable for the misplaced assumptions upon which it was based. By the middle of January the King had grown tired of an affair which had seen the Countess of Carlisle temporarily banished from Court. In order 'to avoid greater disorders', he expressed his surprise at the recent rumour that he was about to appoint a new Lord Admiral 'as he had never thought about it, and those who were most talked about were possibly the ones he had least in view'. Holland was mortified, denying any intention to manipulate the King, while Chateauneuf took to mending fences with Carlisle, to no avail.⁷

Eight years later Ireland's Lord Deputy, Thomas Wentworth, and his ally Archbishop Laud, were more successful in persuading Charles to appoint their nominee as Lord High Admiral. Shortly after his elevation to the Admiralty in March 1638, the Earl of Northumberland penned a letter of thanks to Wentworth. 'Though I must attribute this Act to proceed from their Majesties Grace and Favour', he wrote, 'yet can I not be unmindful of the Discourse I had with your Lordship in Sion Gallery,

6 P.R.O., [Chancery] 115/M32/8176, 5 Dec. 1629, Flower to Scudamore; H.M.C., *Rept. on the MSS. of the Duke of Buccleuch & Queensbury*, III. 346, 17 Dec. 1629, Dixon to Montagu; C.S.P.V., 1629-32, XXII, 1/11 Jan. 1630, Soranzo to Doge & Senate, pp.263-4.

7 C.S.P.V., 1629-32, 15/25 Jan. 1630, Soranzo to Doge and Senate, p.276.

and those noble and friendly offices you have since been pleased to do me'.⁸ However, it would be a mistake to assume that Wentworth and Laud had succeeded in manipulating Charles where Holland and Carlisle had failed. Early in 1637 Laud had attempted to persuade the King to add Northumberland to the Admiralty Commission. Charles, however, was keenly aware that Northumberland's only experience of naval affairs had been as commander of the Second Ship Money fleet. Thus he told Laud that, although 'he liked my Lord of Northumberland's service exceeding well,...he would have more experience of him' before promoting him.⁹ Quite clearly, Charles was capable of making up his own mind.

Beyond such matters with which the King was bound to be concerned, the extent of his involvement in naval affairs was primarily dependent on his understanding of his own function rather than on institutional forms. While Buckingham was Lord Admiral neither James I nor Charles I chose to interfere in the running of the Navy. On learning in July 1627 that Buckingham had already issued instructions to two of his admirals in the Channel before leaving for the Ile de Ré, Secretary Coke remarked that 'to ad anie power by new instructions fro[m] his M^ajestie over them wil not bee fitt'.¹⁰ During the war with France Buckingham was even given a free hand in deciding strategy. Shortly before the Duke returned from Ré, Charles granted him the power '(in case ye should imagine that ye have not enough already) to put in execution any of those designs ye mentioned to Jack Epslie [sic], or any other that you shall like of'.¹¹

8 *Strafforde's Letters*, ii. 154, 21 March 1638.

9 *The Works of the Most Reverend Father in God, William Laud, DD*, ed. James Bliss, (7 vols., Oxford, 1847-60), vii. 311, 18 Jan. 1637, Laud to Wentworth.

10 P.R.O.,. SP16/72/48, 31 July 1627, Coke to Conway.

11 *Hardwicke's Misc. State Papers, 1501-1726*, ed. Philip Yorke, 2 vols., (London, 1778), ii. 20, 6 Nov. 1627. 'Epslie' was Sir John Hippisley,

By comparison, after Buckingham's death Charles assumed a higher profile in naval affairs. This is not readily apparent from the number of times he sat with the Admiralty Commissioners. The King attended just eight of the more than three hundred meetings for which there is a record. He seems to have deliberately limited his presence to those occasions when major issues were under discussion. Six of the meetings he attended were concerned with the Navy, of which four dealt with criticism of the Ship Money Fleets.¹² A fifth meeting, in April 1632, witnessed a debate about a proposed reduction in crew establishments, in which the King heard both sides with an eye to being 'umpire himself'.¹³ At the remaining meeting, held in January 1635, Charles announced his decision to build a dry dock at Portsmouth and to improve the security at the other yards.¹⁴ But although Charles continued to distance himself from the routine of naval administration, he nevertheless took the opportunity of a change in the Admiralty in 1628 to assume greater control. This is clearly to be seen in the appointment of captains.

Buckingham had appointed captains at his own discretion. In June 1626 he had presented a list of captains who were to serve in Willoughby's expedition to the Council of War, of which he was a member, for its approval, just as he had presented a further list to the Privy Council in February 1627.¹⁵ However, it seems doubtful that the Duke had ever considered himself subordinate to the Privy Council in such matters,

Lieut. of Dover Castle.

12 P.R.O., SP16/475 fos.427, 480-1, 483v-4, 490r-v. The 2 meetings attended by Charles which were unconnected with the Navy concerned a new saltpetre contract & an Admiralty Court matter: *ibid.*, fos.440v-1; SP16/353 fo.48v.

13 Thomas Birch, *The Court and Times of Charles the First*, ed. R.F. Williams, (2 vols., London, 1848), II. 187, 25 Oct. 1632, Pory to Brooke. 14 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.367r-v.

15 P.R.O., SP16/28 fo.15r-v; *A.P.C.*, 1627, pp.93-4.

while his relationship with the Council of War is perhaps revealed by the message he sent during one of his absences. 'In Business concerning the Navy', he wrote, the councillors were permitted to 'proceede as they in theire wisdomes should think fitt'.¹⁶

By contrast, shortly after the establishment of the Admiralty Commission, the King limited the right of its members to appoint captains. The Commissioners were to be permitted to choose captains during periods of modest naval activity, but they were to defer to Charles at times of 'greater service'.¹⁷ It was in accordance with this pronouncement, even if it was significantly at variance with the authority previously enjoyed by Buckingham, that the captains of the first three Ship Money fleets (1635-7) were selected by the King rather than by the Commissioners.¹⁸ But it was a departure from his earlier promise that in May 1629 Charles insisted that Richard Plumleigh be allowed to command one of the ships of the Channel squadron.¹⁹ In 1631 Charles overrode the Admiralty's decision to install Thomas Porter as captain of the *First Whelp*.²⁰ The following year, Charles appointed all the captains of the Channel Guard himself. The installation of the Earl of Northumberland as Lord High Admiral in 1638 did not prompt Charles to relinquish his control over appointments immediately. He chose the

16 P.R.O., SP16/28 fo.68.

17 P.R.O., SP16/118/1, 1 Oct. 1628, Nicholas memo. annotated by Charles.

18 C.S.P.V., 1636-9, p.533, 18/28 March 1636, Correr to Doge and Senate; P.R.O., SP16/349/38, 9 Mar. 1637, list of captains chosen 'by his Ma[ajes]tie'; SP16/354/119, 29 April 1637, Smith to Nicholas.

19 P.R.O., SP16/143/17, 23 May 1629, list of ships & captains by Nicholas. Plumleigh had distinguished himself in Dec. 1627, when he had assumed command of the pinnace in which he was travelling after the captain was killed during a fight with a Dunkirker: SP16/86/77; *Commons Debates, 1628*, ed. R.C. Johnson & others, (6 vols., New Haven, Conn., 1977-83), iv. 201.

20 P.R.O., SP16/190/35, 6 May 1631, Dorset to Heath.

captains of the Fourth Ship Money Fleet himself, although he did so in Northumberland's presence.²¹ It was not until February 1639 that the Admiralty Secretary felt able to state that only those who petitioned Northumberland could expect to receive a commission.²²

The limitations placed upon the Admiralty Commissioners' right to appoint captains inevitably included flag officers. When in February 1638 the King wrote to inform Wentworth of the appointment of Thomas Kettleby as Admiral on the Irish coast, he made a point of assuring the Lord Deputy that 'he is of my owne choice'.²³ Neither Charles nor his father would have done this while Buckingham was alive. In March 1623 James was faced with numerous petitioners anxious to replace Sir Henry Mervyn as Admiral of the Narrow Seas, who had been suspended for alleged piracy, but he deferred to Buckingham, for 'it properly belong[s] unto yor Lo[r]dship] and...hee would not doe y[ou]r Lo[r]dship] that wrong as to interest anybody in it without your order'.²⁴ Charles also allowed Buckingham to choose his own Admiral of the Narrow Seas. When in September 1625 the officer whom the Duke had originally chosen to replace Mervyn died, Buckingham appointed his successor on his own warrant.²⁵ After the Duke's death, however, it was Charles who, in May 1631, bestowed the place of Admiral of the Narrow Seas 'of his own accord'.²⁶ Charles evidently allowed the Admiralty Commissioners to select the Admiral of the Narrow Seas in 1634, but the appointment was

21 P.R.O., SP16/386/48, 10 April 1638, Smith to Pennington.

22 P.R.O., SP16/413/56, 21 Feb. 1639, Smith to Pennington.

23 P.R.O., S[ignet] Off[ice] 1/3, fo.66v, 8 Feb. 1638.

24 Brit. Lib., Harl. MS. 1581, fo.256r-v, 24 Mar. 1623, St. Leger to Buckingham.

25 P.R.O., SP16/6/106, 25 Sept. 1625, Buckingham to Palmer.

26 *Court and Times*, 11. 118, 12 May 1631, Beaulieu to Puckering.

apparently subject to his approval.²⁷

Just as Charles appointed the admirals of the small annual squadrons in the Narrow and Irish seas after Buckingham's death, so too the Duke's demise witnessed a transformation in the King's role in the appointment of commanders of large fleets. In theory, Buckingham was never permitted to offer another peer the command of an 'extraordinary' fleet. Instead, he was only afforded the right of nomination, even if the peer concerned was a member of his own family. Thus in May 1623 his father-in-law, the Earl of Rutland, professed himself thankful to the Duke 'for desyringe his Ma[ajes]tie to nominate me admirall' of the fleet which was to be sent to Spain to fetch Buckingham and Prince Charles.²⁸ By contrast, the Admiralty Commissioners found themselves rebuffed when they attempted to nominate Sir John Chudleigh for the command of the ships earmarked for the blockade of the Elbe in May 1629. Instead, the King chose John Pennington, whom the Commissioners had not even shortlisted.²⁹ Charles' reasons for doing so are unstated, but he was obviously not prepared to overlook an officer whose naval career was more distinguished than Chudleigh's.³⁰ Only the impending peace treaty between Denmark and the Emperor, which rendered an English blockade of the Elbe impractical, allowed the Commissioners to save face, for it seems to have given them the excuse they needed to sack Pennington and transfer his ships to the

27 P.R.O., SP16/262/68, 14 March 1634, Coke to Windebank.

28 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1581 fo.131. However, one might argue that Buckingham's nomination was a mere formality.

29 P.R.O., SP16/143/17, 23 May 1629, list of ships and captains annotated by Charles; Birch, *Court and Times*, ii, 15, 28 May 1629, Gresley to Puckering.

30 Pennington had commanded a squadron of ships which were loaned to the French in May 1625, a business complicated by its political sensitivity. He had gone on to command the squadron which blockaded Dunkirk in the summer, & held various naval commands thereafter. For his unswerving loyalty to the King, see below, p.40.

Channel squadron.³¹

The Admiralty's authority was again undermined by the King in 1635, when the Earl of Lindsey received his commission as admiral of the First Ship Money fleet under the Great Seal. Commissions under the Great Seal had previously been issued to Rutland in 1623, to Lindsey in 1628, and even to Buckingham in 1627, when he had commanded the fleet sent to Ré.³² However, as the Admiralty Secretary Edward Nicholas pointed out, Lindsey's commission of 1635 was unprecedented because he commanded a fleet 'on our owne Coast' rather than in foreign waters.³³ The distinction may seem trivial now, but Nicholas was living in an age when such things mattered. Furthermore, the manner of Lindsey's appointment can only have served to enhance Nicholas' sense of grievance at the way in which the Admiralty had been treated since 1628, for he also viewed with dismay its financial domination by the Exchequer.³⁴

Charles' involvement in the Navy's internal affairs after Buckingham's death was not restricted to the appointment of flag officers and captains. Charles had allowed Buckingham the right to commission vessels for active service while he was alive. The only time the King is known to have expressed concern about the number of ships at sea was in November 1627, when Buckingham was still at Ré.³⁵ During the early 1630s, however, Charles specified the ships which were to form the Channel Guard, just as he also chose their captains.³⁶ The King also determined their time of service. When in August 1633 the Admiralty

31 P.R.O., SP16/146/37, 7 July 1629, Pennington to Admiralty;
SP16/147/2, 15 July 1629, Pennington to Pembroke.

32 P.R.O., C231/4, fos.151,224r-v,255v.

33 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.554.

34 See below, pp.48-50.

35 A.P.C., 1627-8, pp.125-6, 2 Nov. 1627, memo., Charles to Privy Council.
36 P.R.O., SP16/214/6; SP16/475 fo.326; SP16/260/100.

Commissioners wanted to keep Pennington's squadron at sea longer than originally intended, they were obliged to seek the King's permission.³⁷ Northumberland's rise to prominence induced Charles to lessen his grip; even before the Earl's appointment as Lord Admiral, he was accorded the right to choose the ships of the Winter Guard.³⁸ Nevertheless, Northumberland was never permitted to determine the number of ships needed at sea. Indeed, in 1639 he had to beg the King to increase the size of the Fifth Ship Money Fleet.³⁹

Charles I's increased involvement in naval affairs after 1628 reflected the greater role he assumed in foreign policy following Buckingham's death. The Navy was an important tool of foreign policy, and by assuming responsibility for the appointment of flag officers and captains, the number of ships and the length of time they were at sea, Charles clearly hoped to fashion that tool more effectively. Once his ships were at sea, Charles continued to take the closest interest in them. This was especially so during the Ship Money years, when he issued orders through the two Secretaries of State regarding the activities of his ships. For example, on 1 July 1636 Secretary of State Sir Francis Windebank instructed Northumberland to sail in search of the Dutch fishing fleet on the express order of the King, although the Admiralty Commissioners did not adjourn for a summer recess for another three days.⁴⁰ Northumberland's appointment as Lord Admiral heralded no major change in this respect. Charles not only read many of the despatches

37 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.311; SP16/244/15.

38 P.R.O., SP16/367/38, 4 Sept. 1637, Windebank to Northumberland. This was yet another affront to the Admiralty Commissioners.

39 P.R.O., SP16/413/56, 21 Feb. 1639, Smith to Pennington. For the background to this, see SP16/409/44,194; SP16/412/20.

40 H.M.C., *3rd Rept.*, appendix, p.73.

sent to the Lord Admiral,⁴¹ but he also continued to issue instructions governing operations, which he would not have dreamed of doing while Buckingham was alive. One of Northumberland's letters, written shortly after a naval squadron under the command of the Marquis of Hamilton arrived off Leith in May 1639, offers a revealing glimpse of the Earl's inferior position in the command structure. Hamilton, it seems, had written directly to the King asking for fresh supplies for his ships. Although it was Northumberland who replied to Hamilton's letter, he merely communicated the orders he had received from Charles.⁴²

The King's intervention in naval affairs after Buckingham's death did not mean that he was uninterested in the Navy while the Duke was alive. Charles displayed an evident enthusiasm for his ships in June 1627, when he visited Portsmouth shortly before the fleet departed for the Île de Ré. Dining aboard the flagship, the *Triumph*, 'his whole discourse was of his ships in general', and of the *Triumph* in particular, which had never been to sea before. Indeed, he enquired of her captain

(amongst many other pertinent questions) of her trimnesse, & (to use his own phrase), whether shee cund [could] yar [yare] or noe? Saying w[il]thall yt my Lo[r]d of Buckingham told him shee was an excellent saylor but that shee was a litle to hard in her Helme.⁴³

Charles retained this inquisitiveness about his ships in the 1630s. After the launch of two new ships in 1633, Charles accompanied them for part of their journey from Woolwich to their moorings at Chatham to see for himself how they handled.⁴⁴ In March 1635 Charles spent nearly an

41 P.R.O., SP16/415/61, 27 Mar. 1639, Smith to Pennington.

42 Scot. R.O., Hamilton MS, GD406/1/815, 17 May 1639, Northumberland to Hamilton. I am grateful to Prof. Russell for drawing the Hamilton MSS. to my attention.

43 P.R.O., SP16/66/67, 11 June 1627, Robert Mason to Nicholas. A ship which was 'yare' was one which moved quickly (*Oxf. Eng. Dict.*, 2nd edn).

44 Phineas Pett, pp.149-50.

hour aboard the newly built *Leopard* at Woolwich in the hope that the wind would allow the ship to be sailed to her moorings in the time he was there.⁴⁵ Charles expected to be informed by others of the performance of his new ships if he was unable to find time to see them for himself. When Admiral Pennington communicated his opinion of the sailing qualities of the newly built *Unicorn* to the Admiralty in 1634, he also despatched an identical letter to the King.⁴⁶

Charles clearly entertained an interest in naval affairs before 1628, but Buckingham's death transformed him from an admiring spectator to an active participant. Unlike the fleet review at Portsmouth in 1627, Charles' inspection of the yards at Chatham and Portsmouth in 1631 was imbued with more than ceremonial significance. Indeed, the favourable impression that he gained from his visit to Chatham in June, during which time he went into 'almost evelry room in each shipp', was the essential precondition for the continued existence of the Admiralty Commission. It provided proof of the ability of the Commissioners to effect badly needed reforms.⁴⁷ It was these reforms which Charles may himself have helped to set in train seven months earlier.

In order to understand this we need to refer to a paper written by Edward Nicholas in August 1630 at the behest of the King.⁴⁸ This reveals

45 *Ibid.*, p.157.

46 P.R.O., SP16/267/55, 8 May 1634, Pennington to Admiralty; Scot.R.O., GD406/1/290, same date, Pennington to Charles.

47 For these reforms, see below, ch.2.

48 Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2541 fo.157 (Nicholas' draft); Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64903 fo.30r-v (fair copy). The draft is dated 20 Aug. 1630, but the endorsement on the fair copy says that it was presented to the King in Aug. 1631 at Beaulieu. The date on the fair copy is incorrect. Between 18 & 23 Aug. 1631 Charles was at Woodstock, not Beaulieu (*C.S.P.D.* 1631-3, pp.133-4), whereas he is known to have been at Beaulieu between 15 & 24 Aug. 1630. (*C.S.P.D.* 1629-31, pp.329, 333).

that Charles desired to know what were the various functions of the Lord High Admiral. This does not prove that he was seriously contemplating an immediate alteration in the government of the Navy, but it is highly suggestive. So too is the fact that news of the paper seems to have leaked out, for the following month it was rumoured that the King was going to make the Earl of Holland Lord Admiral after all.⁴⁹ The leak may have been deliberate, and Nicholas may have been its source. In March 1631 Nicholas' close friend, Admiral Pennington, was heard to say that Holland's appointment was imminent.⁵⁰ The connection between Nicholas and Pennington is necessarily tenuous, but Nicholas himself admitted that he sometimes passed confidential information to Pennington.⁵¹

The King's role in encouraging this rumour is uncertain. However, the evidence is consistent with the hypothesis that Charles, through Nicholas, manipulated Holland's known desire for the Admiralty in order to obtain an improvement in the quality of naval administration. The King's concern for reform dates from at least October 1630, when he asked the Admiralty Commissioner Sir John Coke to write a report on the Navy.⁵² Coke's subsequent indictment of the way in which the yards were run must have caused Charles to question the wisdom of continuing the

49 P.R.O., C115/M32/8180, 25 Sept. 1630, Flower to Scudamore.

50 *Court and Times*, ii, 99, 6 March 1631, Mead to Stuteville. See also P.R.O., C115/M31/8131, 6 March 1631, Flower to Scudamore. The King & Queen's subsequent visit to Cambridge University, where they were 'sumptuously feasted' by Holland, the University's Chancellor, must have lent credence to the rumour; C115/M32/8191, 24 March 1631, Flower to Scudamore.

51 P.R.O., SP16/200/27, 24 Sept. 1631, Nicholas to Pennington. Seven years later, Nicholas told Pennington that the younger Sir Henry Vane would be made joint Navy Treasurer, although the information was then secret; SP16/402/61.

52 P.R.O., SP16/174/21, 10 Oct. 1630, Coke to Nicholas. However, Coke's original brief was limited to the captains who had served that year.

Admiralty Commission.⁵³ If the Commissioners were incapable of achieving the necessary improvements, then it might be better to place the Admiralty in the hands of someone who could. It was perhaps to remind them of this that the King allowed Holland to accompany him to witness the launch of the *Vanguard* at Woolwich in April 1631.⁵⁴ It undoubtedly underlay his decision to allow Holland to attend the inspection of Chatham yard, during which visit the Earl's friends fully expected that he would be appointed Lord Admiral.⁵⁵ Unfortunately for Holland, however, the Admiralty Commissioners had risen to the challenge magnificently. In March 1631 Coke drafted a set of proposals to reform the Navy Board. These were issued as a set of Admiralty Instructions the following month.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Commissioners ensured that the King was so favourably impressed with what he saw at Chatham that, according to Nicholas, 'there is now not a word nor soe much as a Thought of any Lo[r]d Adm[irall]'.⁵⁷ When Charles visited Portsmouth seven weeks later, the Earl of Holland was conspicuous by his absence.⁵⁸

The crucial role played by the King in achieving naval reform in 1631 highlights the difference between the authority wielded by Buckingham and his immediate successors. An even more visible example of the Admiralty's relative decline during the 1630s is afforded by reference to Northumberland's naval enquiry of 1636. Following his return from sea that year, Northumberland drew up a list of complaints, which Charles

53 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64901 fos.78-9, 30 Oct. 1630.

54 *Phineas Pett*, p.146.

55 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 7000, fo.329, 16 June 1631, Pory to Puckering.

56 Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2541, fos.174-180. For a discussion of this document, see below, pp.87,90.

57 P.R.O., SP16/195/6, 25 June 1631, Nicholas to Pennington.

58 *A Royalist's Notebook: The Commonplace Book of Sir John Oglander Kt of Nunwell*, ed. Francis Bamford (London, 1936), pp.62-3.

instructed him to present to the Privy Council. This proved deeply offensive to the Admiralty Commissioners, for although they were all members of the Council, Northumberland had not informed them separately of his grievances in advance.⁵⁹ Lord Deputy Wentworth at least applauded his ally's decision to bypass the Admiralty. Affirming that 'it was not comely for your Lordship to go any other Paths than that which led directly to the Head', he urged Northumberland to continue to proceed with the King's prior knowledge and consent, 'for in such a Case, prosecuted with the King's liking, he will not leave you finally and totally'.⁶⁰ This sort of behaviour would have been unthinkable ten years earlier, when Buckingham had initiated his own investigation into the Navy. There could hardly be a more striking illustration of the central role Charles had assumed than Northumberland's conduct in 1636.

Naval reform was just one area in which Charles showed a greater interest after Buckingham's death. Another area which interested him was ship design. Charles had seldom involved himself in the design of ships while Buckingham was alive, perhaps because the demands of war had meant that he had been unable to afford to build anything larger than a pinnace. Nevertheless, when in December 1625 various shipwrights exhibited models and plans of projected new ships at Hampton Court, Charles was evidently present.⁶¹ The degree to which Charles involved himself in ship construction in the 1630s has not always elicited the approval of historians. Oppenheim accused Charles of 'sometimes

59 *Strafforde's Letters*, ii, 40, 6 Dec, 1636, Northumberland to Wentworth.

60 *Ibid.*, p.43, 2 Jan. 1637. Laud, however, thought the Commissioners' sense of affront was understandable; *Laud's Works*, vii, 311.

61 *Phineas Pett*, p.136; P.R.O., SP16/11/62-3. On the Hampton Court meeting & the pinnaces, see Andrew Thrush, 'In Pursuit of the Frigate, 1603-40', *Historical Research*, (forthcoming).

overruling the opinions of his officials in technical details of which he could have possessed no special knowledge', The most notable example concerned the alteration of the number of guns allocated to the *Sovereign of the Seas*. Charles increased these from ninety to 102, although no alteration was made in the size of the ship to accommodate this extra weaponry. As Brian Lavery has pointed out, Charles' concern to reach the 'magic number' of 100 guns began the policy of over-gunning 'which was to dog the British Navy for centuries'.⁶²

In addition to the arbitrary increase in the number of guns, Charles proved so impatient to launch the *Sovereign* that he chose to ignore the advice of her builder, Phineas Pett. Pett considered that it would be better to delay the launch until she was needed for service, or else she would have to be docked again to be cleaned and graved. In the margin alongside this suggestion Charles scribbled the words 'I am not of your opinion'.⁶³ Charles' insistence that the ship should be launched as soon as possible was directly responsible for the fiasco which ensued. Endeavouring to launch the ship during 'a very poor tide', Pett failed in full view of the King, the Queen and a large audience of courtiers. The launch was subsequently postponed for nearly three weeks, when the ship was floated without ceremony and at night.⁶⁴

The King's role in the construction of the *Sovereign* was in many ways reprehensible, but the ship was nevertheless the first to carry a full battery of guns on all three decks. Although she spent the first fifteen years of her existence in mothballs at Chatham, she was subsequently

62 Oppenheim, *The Administration of the Royal Navy*, pp.252,262; B. Lavery *The Ship of the Line, volume I: The development of the battlefleet 1650-1850*, (London, 1983), pp.16-7.

63 P.R.O., SP16/361/73, [13 June?] 1637, Pett to Charles.

64 Phineas Pett, pp.164-6.

modified and proved highly successful. On one occasion, Charles' refusal to concede to conservative opinion was probably justified. In 1633 Sir John Coke was asked to intercede with the King concerning the dimensions of two proposed warships, the *Leopard* and the *Swallow*. Charles had accepted specifications which were so unorthodox that 'the length by the keele is to be 93 foote, w^hilch is as long as the *Nonsuche* being a ship of the second rang [*sic*], whereas these are desseigned not to exceed 400 tonne'.⁶⁵ It was just as well that Coke failed, for the *Swallow* at least was to prove a model ship.⁶⁶

In the 1620s and 1630s, no-one dared to question the King's right to interfere in the Navy's internal affairs, and perhaps no-one wanted to. When Sir Kenelm Digby implicitly criticised Charles in 1633 for the role he had played in determining the dimensions of two new ships, the *Charles* and the *Henrietta Maria*, it was because of the King's failure to consult enough specialists rather than on the grounds of unwarranted intervention.⁶⁷ Coke apparently welcomed the King's new-found involvement in naval matters, although he must have known that it necessarily spelled a reduction in the Admiralty's power. He regarded Charles' resolution to judge for himself the quality of his sea captains in October 1630 as 'princely & ful of wisdome'.⁶⁸

In view of the greater authority which Charles exercised in naval affairs after 1628, it is striking that he lost control over most of the Navy to the Long Parliament in 1642. The answer to this apparent paradox lies in the nature of the political crisis of 1640-2, which transformed

65 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64906 fo.84, 27 May 1633, Windebank to Coke.

66 P.R.O., SP16/240/33, 5 June 1633, Coke to Windebank; SP16/291/95, 30 June 1635, Pennington to Nicholas.

67 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64905 fo.102r-v, 2 Jan. 1633, Digby to Coke.

68 See above, n.52.

the parliament from an assembly critical of royal government to one which competed with the King for executive power.

Charles fatally weakened his ultimate authority by choosing to exercise it. Following the attempt to arrest the Five Members in January 1642 he ordered Pennington to transport Lord George Digby to safety. Viewed from a purely naval perspective this was highly irregular, for even Charles had never presumed to issue orders to captains directly. However, Northumberland's willingness to take his instructions from the parliament meant that Charles was forced to act without the Earl's knowledge. In doing this he was unquestionably within his rights. When Pennington was called to the bar of the Commons to explain his conduct, he pointed out that, 'being employed by the lord admiral under the king's authority, he was bound to obey the king's command'.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, Charles' action exacerbated an already strained political situation, and led inexorably to a confrontation between the King and the parliament over who controlled the Navy. The distaste with which one M.P. listened to Pennington was undoubtedly more widely felt.⁷⁰ Six weeks later the parliament named the Earl of Warwick as admiral of the Channel Guard on its own authority, rejecting the King's appointment of Pennington.⁷¹ Charles denounced this act of defiance as being 'the first time that the houses of parliament have taken upon them the nomination

69 *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament, 3 Jan. to 5 Mar. 1642*, ed. W.H. Coates, A.S. Young, V.F. Snow, (New Haven & London, 1982), p.176. He had evidently been enjoined to obey only Charles' orders; P.R.O., SP16/488/51,53. He complied with Northumberland's order to appear before the parliament only after receiving the King's warrant; SP16/488/70, 18 Jan. 1642, Northumberland to Pennington; Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 9294, fo.253, 19 Jan. 1642, Charles to Pennington.

70 *Private Journals, 3 Jan. to 5 Mar. 1642*, p.179. The M.P. was Sir Walter Erle.

71 *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament, 7 Mar. to 1 June 1642*, ed. V.F. Snow & A.S. Young, (New Haven & London, 1987), pp.23,43,80.

of the chief sea-commander'.⁷² This was undoubtedly true, but by his own behaviour two months earlier Charles had manoeuvred his opponents into a position in which they were left with no choice.

Charles now needed to undermine the parliament's authority if he was to regain control of the fleet. The best way to do this was to create a royalist party among the Navy's captains. However, Charles was partly handicapped by the fact that Northumberland allowed the parliament the right to vet each captain. As a result, he lost the services of two experienced captains, Thomas Price and Sir David Murray, whose names were struck off the list submitted to the Commons on 10 March.⁷³ Charles compounded this problem, however, by falling victim to his own sense of outrage. The contemporary royalist historian, Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, later recalled how Charles refused to permit the Navy's Comptroller, George Carteret, to serve as Warwick's Vice-Admiral.⁷⁴ Carteret was an experienced officer, having entered the Navy as a lieutenant in 1631, and his known royalist sympathies might well have made him invaluable in securing at least part of the fleet for the King.⁷⁵ Instead, the parliament appointed the puritan Surveyor of the Navy, William Batten, whose loyalty to Warwick helped to prevent the royalists from seizing the fleet on 2 July.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Charles made

72 *Ibid.*, p.122.

73 *Journals of the House of Commons*, ii. p.474, 10 March 1642. Price commanded the *Mary Rose* as late 5 April 1642, however: P.R.O., Aludittl Offfice] 1/1705/88, p.9. Capt. John Burley was also deselected on 10 March, but he was reinstated 4 days later: *Commons' Journals*, ii. 478.

74 Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, ed. W.D. Macray, (6 vols., Oxford, 1888), pp.224-5.

75 For Carteret's sympathies, see his letter to Pennington of 6 Jan. 1642: P.R.O., SP16/488/28. For his 1631 commission, see SP16/199/28.

76 Clarendon described Batten as 'furious in the new fancies of religion': *History of the Rebellion*, ii. 225. Batten, however, was a presbyterian royalist during the 2nd Civil War.

an effort to bind at least two captains to his cause. The first was Capt. Henry Stradling, the Vice-Admiral of the Irish Guard, with whom he established personal contact as early as 8 January.⁷⁷ Stradling's willingness to receive his orders directly from Charles undoubtedly explains why he was subsequently knighted, and also why efforts were made in the Commons to secure his removal on 10 March.⁷⁸ The second officer Charles courted was Capt. John Mennes, whom he knighted in February 1642 and who served as Warwick's Rear-Admiral until he was displaced on 4 July.⁷⁹ However, the entire royalist following did not consist solely of Mennes and Stradling. By June 1642 there were ten or eleven captains in places of command whom Charles could rely on.⁸⁰

Unlike most of the officers who remained loyal to Warwick, nearly all of the royalists had long naval careers.⁸¹ Nevertheless, they were in a minority and their ships were scattered. In early July 1642 Warwick commanded a fleet of at least seventeen ships in the Downs, but only five of their captains were royalists, who refused to sign a written declaration of obedience to the Earl on 2 July.⁸²

It was clear that, if Charles was to reassert his authority over the entire Navy, he would need to rely upon more than the loyalty of

77 Glamorgan Record Office, D/D TD 8, 8 Jan. 1642, Charles to Stradling.

78 W.A. Shaw, *The Knights of England*, (2 vols., London, 1906), ii. 212; *Private Journals*, 7 Mar. to 1 June 1642, p.23. The motion against Stradling was defeated by 9 votes.

79 Shaw, ii. 212.

80 They were John Burley, Henry Dunning, Richard Fogg, Robert Fox, Thomas Kettleby, John Mennes, John Strachan, Henry Stradling, Robert Slingsby & Baldwin Wake. Dr. Kennedy omits Dunning, who commanded a mere ketch, but adds Philip Hill, who may not have seen service: D.E. Kennedy, 'Naval Captains at the Outbreak of the English Civil War', *Mariner's Mirror*, xlv1 (1960), pp.181-98.

81 The least experienced royalists were Wake (1st command, 1640) & Strachan (1st command, 1641). Kennedy, *passim*, points out the general difference of allegiance between newcomers & long-serving officers.

82 *Lords' Journal*, v. 179.

individual captains; he would also have to undermine the legitimacy of Warwick's commission. This could best be achieved by dismissing Northumberland, for although Warwick had been appointed to command the fleet at the behest of the parliament, he had received his commission from Northumberland. Thus, on 28 June, Charles sacked Northumberland and ordered the command of the fleet to be transferred to Pennington.⁸³ Warwick was now placed in a difficult position for, as the royalist Capt. Slingsby pointed out, Northumberland's dismissal meant that 'all other commissions, as well your Lordship's, as all Captains under you, and our Obedience to your Lordship as our Admiral' were made void.⁸⁴ Yet the King's attempt to regain control of the ships in the Downs failed completely. In response to Northumberland's dismissal, the parliament simply appointed Warwick Lord High Admiral on its own authority instead.

This act alone may not have been decisive. Clarendon believed that the royalist failure was Pennington's fault. When Pennington arrived in the Downs he found that Warwick was dining ashore with several of his officers. Instead of rowing out to the fleet himself, however, he sent the former Comptroller of the Navy, Sir Henry Palmer, to gauge the mood aboard the ships. Clarendon thought that this was the crucial mistake, for if Pennington had gone himself, 'who had a greater interest in the common seamen than any other person, having commanded them so many

83 For the revocation of the grant, see H.M.C., *3rd Rept.*, app., p.85. Charles informed Warwick of Northumberland's dismissal the same day: *The Letters of Charles I*, ed. Sir Charles Petrie, (London, 1968), p.125. He also told the dockyard officials at Chatham at the same time: H.M.C., *5th Rept.*, app., pt. 1, p.33, 28 June 1642, Charles I to Phineas Pett. On 23 June Charles ordered Stradling to bring his ship, the *Bonaventure*, to Newcastle. He issued the same order to Capt. Wheeler of the *Greyhound* on 29 June, who evidently refused to comply. See *Documents Relating to the Civil War, 1642-1648*, ed. J.R. Powell & E.K. Timings, N.R.S., cv, (1963).

84 *Lords' Journal*, v. 179.

years, he might have carried all the fleet whither he would'. As things turned out, Palmer's arrival merely prompted each captain to consult with his colleagues to decide what to do. This gave Warwick sufficient time to return to the fleet, for he had been informed of what had happened by Batten. By then the game was up. Warwick encircled the royalist ships and forced them to surrender.⁸⁵

Despite Pennington's inertia, ultimate responsibility for the royalist failure lay squarely with the King, whose decision to provide Lord Digby with a safe passage abroad ultimately proved decisive. In the tense atmosphere of 1642, Charles' attempt to ward off the consequences of one disaster by trying to be his own Lord Admiral precipitated another as great as any the royalists were to suffer on the battiefield during the Civil War. Yet his conduct was eminently understandable, and not simply because he was honour-bound to protect Digby from arrest. Charles had taken a great interest in naval affairs since Buckingham's death; until 1638 he took responsibility for all major decisions, and a good deal of minor ones too. Even after the appointment of a new Lord Admiral, Charles continued to take decisions which ten years earlier he would have left to Buckingham. Disastrous though it proved, in January 1642 Charles merely took his authority to its logical conclusion.

II. The Authority of the Lord High Admiral

Before 1628 the naval duties of the Lord Admiral had never been properly defined. The elderly seaman Sir William Monson maintained that,

85 Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, pp.217-26. Pennington allegedly pleaded illness to avoid rowing out to the ships himself. For Warwick's account of the seizure of the royalist ships, see *Documents Relating to the Civil War*, pp.17-8.

in addition to former precedents, the Lord Admiral's functions were 'sufficiently known by the extent of his letters patent'.⁸⁶ Yet neither the patent which appointed Buckingham, nor those which appointed his predecessors, contained any mention of the administration of the Navy.⁸⁷ This forced Edward Nicholas to adopt a rather convoluted argument in the paper he presented to the King at Beaulieu in August 1630, which discussed the various parts of the Lord Admiral's authority. In order to attribute responsibility for the government of the Navy to the Lord Admiral, Nicholas was obliged to interpret his patent in precisely the opposite manner to that in which it was intended to be read. He argued that it detailed only those powers which were not germane to the Lord Admiral's office. Thus the Lord Admiral's judicature in maritime affairs, which formed the basis of his non-naval duties, was 'usually granted by expresse words in his pattent, w[hilch] shoves they are not p[ro]lpp[er]ly incident to ye office of Lo[r]d Adm[irall] but belong to yor Ma[jes]tie'.⁸⁸ Ironically, it was not until the Admiralty was placed in commission in September 1628 that the naval responsibilities of the Lord Admiral were committed to paper.⁸⁹

In the second half of the sixteenth century the Navy's senior executive was not the Lord Admiral but the Lord Treasurer. Professor Quinn and Dr. Ryan have drawn attention to the fact that in January 1557 the Privy Council decided to refer 'the whole [of] marine affairs' to the Lord Treasurer. They assert that the Lord Admiral was simply 'the

86 *The Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson*, ed. M. Oppenheim, N.R.S., xliii, (5 vols., 1902-14), iii, 397.

87 Perrin, 'Board of Admiralty', p.128. For Buckingham's patent, see P.R.O., C66/2181/20.

88 See above, n.48.

89 P.R.O., HCA50/2, pp.1-5, commission of 20 Sept. 1628.

executive officer through whom instructions for the fleet was passed',⁹⁰ This view is only slightly overstated. Oppenheim observed that, while Sir John Hawkins was Treasurer of the Navy, both he and Lord Treasurer Burghley 'really constituted the Admiralty',⁹¹ Similar sentiments have been expressed by Robert Kenny, the Earl of Nottingham's biographer. While Nottingham was indeed active in naval administration, he nevertheless 'took a greater interest in the operation of the High Court of Admiralty', from whose proceeds he derived most of his income. This meant that, 'while he lived, Burghley was probably more responsible than Howard for the fundamental policies of the Navy',⁹²

The death of Burghley in 1598 temporarily signalled the end of the Exchequer's domination of the Navy. However, Buckingham's assassination in 1628 once more heralded an important shift in the balance of power between the Navy and the Exchequer. In the 1620s successive Lord Treasurers had been in the pocket of the Lord Admiral, but after Buckingham's death the position was reversed. The new Admiralty Commission was headed by the Lord Treasurer, the Earl of Portland, who was joined in 1632 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Cottington.

Under Portland the Exchequer's domination of the Navy was of a strictly financial nature.⁹³ In matters of routine administration the most outstanding figure in the Admiralty was not the Lord Treasurer, but Secretary Coke. Although Portland had also been one of the original Navy Commissioners appointed in 1618, Coke's experience and expertise in

90 D.B. Quinn & A.N. Ryan, *England's Sea Empire, 1550-1642*, (London, 1983), pp.53-4.

91 *Monson's Tracts*, iii, 391.

92 Kenny, *Elizabeth's Admiral*, pp.36-50,56-9.

93 For evidence that Portland's main concern was finance, see P.R.O., SP16/149/41, 10 Sept, 1629, William Lake (Portland's secretary) to Nicholas; SP16/475 fos.326v-7, 8 Feb. 1634, (Admiralty minutes).

naval administration far exceeded that of his colleagues, a fact which they readily acknowledged. Two months after their appointment, the Commissioners instructed Nicholas, 'for ye better despatch of business', to bring all letters and warrants for signing to Coke first, '& after their Lo[r]dshilpps will signe them'.⁹⁴ During the 1630s Coke's fellow Commissioners regularly delegated to him the task of meeting the Principal Officers of the Navy to discuss the writing of estimates.⁹⁵ Although in 1630 the King approached both Coke and Portland to prepare a written report on the Navy, it was Coke who actually wrote the report, just as it was he who also drafted a set of orders for reforming the Navy which almost certainly formed the basis for the Admiralty's 'Instructions' of April 1631. In addition, it was Coke's proposal that led the King to undertake a fresh building programme in 1632.⁹⁶ It was no wonder that Wentworth described the Navy as Coke's 'mistress', or that Windebank resented his colleague's stranglehold on naval affairs.⁹⁷

Yet although Coke undoubtedly played a central role, it would be a mistake to under-estimate the importance of the Exchequer. Edward Nicholas at least viewed the Lord Treasurer's headship of the Admiralty Commission with alarm. The reason for this was that Nicholas believed that Portland's main concern was to effect savings in the Navy as part of his general policy of financial retrenchment. In one undated

94 P.R.O., SP16/117/76, meeting of 13 Dec. 1628. At a meeting of the Council of War a few days earlier, it was Coke who spoke on behalf of the Admiralty, although 3 of his colleagues were also present; SP16/28 fo.77.

95 P.R.O., SP16/475 fos.321,323v, meetings of 21 Dec. 1633, 18 Jan. 1634; SP16/282/34, 11 Jan. 1635, Coke to Principal Officers.

96 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C173/6), n.d. [1631].

97 P.R.O., SP63/256/19, 11 March 1637; Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Lib. microfilm 285) fo.14, 12 June 1636, Windebank to Northumberland.

memorandum, which was probably intended for the King, Nicholas claimed that Portland 'seeks to lessen ye charge of ye Navy, & soe holdes a spare hand upon it'.⁹⁸ He also asserted that the Lord Treasurer preferred to keep the Navy 'out of repayre or the stores unreplenished than issue money for it out of the Exchequer'.⁹⁹ There was undoubtedly some truth in these statements. During the early 1630s Portland concentrated on reducing the Navy's wartime debts and cutting expenditure on the Navy's current account. Although he found the money to pay for a new building programme, he reduced the Channel squadron to its pre-war level of just four ships. This was despite the threats posed by a burgeoning French Navy and north African piracy, and the growing disregard shown for England's claims to sovereignty over the Channel by the French and the Dutch. The Exchequer's penny-pinching became so severe that between November 1633 and April 1634 there was not a single King's ship in the Narrow Seas. Nicholas was appalled. Writing to a sympathetic John Pennington in October 1633, he confessed to being astonished that, 'some one or 2 ships in these stirring tymes shall not be contynued abroade, when as ev[er]ly day affronts are offred to his Maj[est]y's jurisdiction'.¹⁰⁰

Nicholas at least would have considered D.J. Mathew's claim that the headship of the Admiralty Commission by the Lord Treasurer held 'manifest advantages' for the Navy to have been the complete opposite of the truth.¹⁰¹ Whereas a Lord Admiral was concerned to keep the Navy 'upright, & in good equipage', Portland seemed primarily interested in saving money. Nicholas therefore concluded that 'noe Thres[aurer] or

98 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.506v, n.d.

99 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.515, n.d.

100 P.R.O., SP16/248/65, 28 Oct. 1633.

101 D.J. Mathew, *The Age of Charles I*, (London, 1951), p.259.

officer of ye Exchequer is fitt to be a com[m]issioner for ye Admirallty'.¹⁰²

The appointment to the Admiralty Commission in 1636 of Portland's successor, Lord Treasurer Juxon, did not mean that Nicholas' views were entirely ignored. Next to removing the Lord Treasurer from the Admiralty Commission, the best way to avoid a repetition of the sort of treatment the Navy had received under Portland was to relieve it of its dependence on the Exchequer for its funds. This was partially achieved in October 1634, albeit inadvertently, when the King ordered Ship Money to be paid straight to the Navy Treasurer rather than via the Exchequer in order to avoid the accusation that he was levying a tax. For Nicholas, this must have seemed a step in the right direction, but there was still more to do. In 1635 Ship Money paid only the costs of an extraordinary fleet. Alongside the First Ship Money Fleet were the four ships of the Channel Guard. Although for all intents and purposes these were part of the Ship Money fleet, they were in fact paid for by the Exchequer. In addition, the Exchequer still paid all the Navy's harbour costs. It was in order to break this remaining hold on the Navy's finances that Nicholas proposed an ambitious plan in 1635. In essence, he suggested that these remaining naval costs should be subsumed within the Ship Money fund.¹⁰³ In peacetime, therefore, the Exchequer's sole responsibility for the Navy would have been limited to payment of part of the wages of those few naval officials whose salaries were split between the Exchequer and the naval treasury. In short, Nicholas wanted to secure almost complete financial independence for the Navy.

102 P.R.O., SP16/256/21, n.d.

103 The full plan is laid out in P.R.O., SP16/535/74, n.d. A shorter version is at SP16/475 fo.301r-v.

It is currently believed that Ship Money 'did not reduce the Exchequer's contribution to the cost of running the Navy'.¹⁰⁴ However, Nicholas unquestionably achieved a considerable degree of success. For example, between 1636 and 1639 the cost of the Channel squadron was subsumed within the Ship Money fund.¹⁰⁵ In addition, Ship Money soon embraced the repair of ships. Whereas in 1635 the Navy Board considered the cost of repairing the vessels which were to form the First Ship Money Fleet 'improper to the Charge received from the Countrey', two years later they were expressly instructed to use Ship Money for this purpose.¹⁰⁶ Yet the inroads made by Ship Money into the Exchequer's naval commitments were not as far reaching as Nicholas would have liked. Part of the Navy's harbour costs were still paid for by the Exchequer, and the building programme begun in 1632 continued to be funded almost wholly by the Exchequer. Nevertheless, Nicholas had largely succeeded in his objective, for he had helped to complete the destruction of the Exchequer's stranglehold over the Navy.¹⁰⁷

The Exchequer's decline in Admiralty affairs which followed the death of Lord Treasurer Burghley was not attended by an immediate rise in the power of the Lord Admiral. In the last twenty years in which he held office, the aged Earl of Nottingham relinquished his grip on the Navy to such an extent that he has been described as 'administratively

104 David Thomas, 'Financial and Administrative Developments', in *Before the English Civil War: Essays on Early Stuart Politics and Government*, ed. Howard Tomlinson (London, 1983), p.121.

105 P.R.O., SP16/366/82, n.d., memo. by Nicholas.

106 P.R.O., SP16/284/45, 9 March 1635, Principal Officers to Admiralty; SP16/353 fo.17, 6 May 1637, Admiralty to Principal Officers.

107 For a more detailed and comprehensive treatment of Nicholas' financial plan for the Navy, see Andrew Thrush, 'Naval Finance and the Origins and Development of Ship Money', in *War and Government in Britain, 1598-1650*, ed. Mark C. Fissel (Manchester University Press, forthcoming).

powerless'.¹⁰⁸ The vacuum which this virtual abdication of authority served to create was filled, not by the Lord Treasurer, but by the Navy Board, headed from 1604 by its corrupt Treasurer, Sir Robert Mansell.

It was not until 1618/9, when Nottingham and the Mansell regime were swept away by Buckingham and the Navy Commissioners, that the Lord Admiral emerged from 'the administrative shadows in which he had lingered since the mid-1550s'.¹⁰⁹ Shortly before the Navy Board was suspended, Coke told Buckingham that reform was essential if the Lord Admiral's authority was to be enhanced.¹¹⁰ His superior in the Navy Commission, Lionel Cranfield, was even more explicit about the object of reform, for he protested to Buckingham that the Commissioners' sole aim was 'to restore the Lord Admirall's place to the auncient right and greatness'.¹¹¹ In the eyes of the Commissioners the best way to achieve this was to involve Buckingham in as much of the daily administration of the Navy as possible. In December 1619 they therefore gave him notice that they were likely to 'trouble your Lordship offten with small things' because they were anxious 'not to usurpe ye least part of your Lord[shipl's Authority'.¹¹² Yet the Commissioners were ultimately too successful for their own good, for in elevating the position of the Lord Admiral they helped to create the agent of their own destruction. From the summer of 1626 Buckingham began to entertain doubts about their judgement, and to accuse them of 'coldnes & remisness' regarding the

108 Quinn & Ryan, *England's Sea Empire*, p.212.

109 *Ibid.*, p.224.

110 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64876 fo.72, 7 Nov. 1618, Coke to Buckingham (draft).

111 *The Fortescue Papers*, ed. S.R. Gardiner, Camden Society, new series, (1871), p.62, 17 Nov. 1618, Cranfield to Buckingham. Cranfield was the nominal head of the Navy Commission until he was impeached by the 1624 Parliament.

112 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawlinson A455 fo.114v, 8 Dec. 1619.

preparation of the fleet under Lord Willoughby.¹¹³ The Duke's disenchantment with the Navy Commissioners culminated in February 1628 with their dismissal and the restoration of the Navy Board.

The King, the Exchequer and the Navy Board all served to diminish the power of the Lord Admiral at one time or another. However, the same might also be said of the Privy Council. It was on the Council's authority that control of the Navy was conferred on Winchester in 1557. Moreover, Robert Kenny has observed that, the frequency with which letters sent by the Council on maritime affairs in the later sixteenth century were prefaced with the phrase 'I, the Lord Admirall...suggests that the authority of the lord admiral alone was not always enough for the speedy execution of instructions and that the additional dignity and command of the Privy Council were freely borrowed'.¹¹⁴ It is not to be wondered at that the Elizabethan Council has been described as 'the governing body of the service'.¹¹⁵ Superficially, the same would also seem to be true of its Caroline successor. During the 1620s and 1630s the Council often issued instructions which dealt with naval affairs. Moreover, between 1628 and 1638 the Admiralty Commission, whose members were all Councillors, was effectively a Council sub-committee. However, the extent to which the Admiralty was subordinate to the Council under Charles I remains problematic.

Conciliar naval directives generally fall into three distinct categories. First, there were those orders the Council issued on the King's instruction. These took one of two forms. Normally, they were

113 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.153v, 17 Aug. 1626, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners; *ibid.*, fo.161, 7 Sept. 1626, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners.

114 Kenny, *Elizabeth's Admiral*, pp.55-6.

115 Quinn & Ryan, *England's Sea Empire*, p.54.

directed to the Lord Admiral himself,'¹¹⁶ In the Lord Admiral's absence, however, the King might bypass him altogether. For instance, in 1627 Charles ordered Admiral Button, through the Council, to take the two ships under his command to assist Buckingham at Ré,'¹¹⁷ Whichever form of address was used, the Council was simply acting as the King's mouthpiece. Such documents can therefore not be used to prove that the Lord Admiral was subordinate to the Council.

The second type of conciliar directives were those issued on the Council's own authority during the absence or illness of the Lord Admiral. On the face of it, these were no more demonstrative of the Lord Admiral's subordination to the Council than those written at the behest of the King. Nonetheless, under Buckingham at least, they were construed as the thin end of the wedge. In 1624 Ireland's Lord Deputy, Viscount Falkland, apologised to Buckingham for having released an alleged pirate on the Council's authority during one of Buckingham's absences. The Duke had evidently been so annoyed that Falkland promised that 'hearafter I wilbe better advised to suffer noething to be acted in Admirall causes but yor own warrant shall authorise yt',¹¹⁸

An even more striking example of the Navy's sensitivity towards conciliar incursions into its affairs may lay at the heart of an incident the following year. Between 12 May and 19 June 1625 Buckingham was on an embassy to Paris. Eight days after his departure from England the Council ordered the Navy Commissioners to detail three ships from the fleet then preparing at Plymouth to protect merchant shipping. However, this attempt to reinforce the Channel squadron was apparently

116 For instance, P.R.O., PC2/50, pp.648,665.

117 *A.P.C.*, 1627-8, pp.82-3, 12 Oct. 1627, Privy Council to Button.

118 *Brit. Libr.*, Harl. MS. 1581 fo.308r-v, 29 Feb. 1624.

ignored, as was a fresh Council instruction to outfit a further two ships issued ten days later.¹¹⁹ The cause of this inaction is unclear. Writing at least five years after the event, the former Vice-Admiral of Devon, Sir John Eliot, alleged that Sir John Coke, who was then the chief Navy Commissioner, had blocked the Council's instructions on the grounds that the Commissioners were not subject to its authority, and because there were 'greater preparations then in hand'.¹²⁰ Eliot was Coke's rival, and his version of events may be partial. Nevertheless, it is striking that when Buckingham ordered the Channel Guard to be reinforced eight days after his return from France, the instruction was obeyed.¹²¹ Moreover, Coke's alleged antipathy towards conciliar intervention rings true. In 1618 he told Buckingham that the Lord Admiral received his 'virtu and motion from the first moover the king'.¹²² He said nothing at all about the Council.

It may have been because of a behind-the-scenes row about the scope of the Council's authority in 1625 that, prior to his departure for Ré in 1627, Buckingham left explicit instructions with Edward Nicholas. Nicholas was told to refer all important business to the King, the Privy Council, the Secretaries of State 'or others to whome it may appertayne most p[ro]p[er]ly'; all other matters were to be dealt with by Nicholas himself. These directions constitute a clear acknowledgement of the Council's right during the Lord Admiral's absence to determine naval matters itself, and an apparent abandonment by Buckingham of the

119 *A.P.C. 1625-6*, pp.59,79-80.

120 *Proceedings in Parliament, 1625*, ed. M. Jansson & W.B. Bidwell (New Haven, Conn., 1987), pp.527-9.

121 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fos.32v-3, 27 June 1625, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners.

122 See above, n.110.

position he had adopted in 1624.¹²³ Indeed, before 1641, conciliar intervention was an almost inevitable consequence of the Lord Admiral's absence or sickness. Thus, in 1638 the Navy Board petitioned the Council to issue letters to various J.P.s concerning the transportation of timber to the yards during one of Northumberland's illnesses.¹²⁴

Besides those directives issued at the behest of the King or during the indisposition of the Lord Admiral, there was a third type of Council order. This was issued on its own authority while the Lord Admiral was absent and in good health, which demonstrates that the Council did indeed have a legitimate role to play in naval affairs. However, it was a role which tended to complement rather than to conflict with the power of the Admiralty, for, with its more general authority, the Council was able to involve local administration in naval affairs in a way in which the Lord Admiral or his Commissioners could not. In 1626, for example, the Council issued letters to various Deputy Lieutenants ordering them to suppress a serious naval mutiny at Portsmouth.¹²⁵ This was clearly a matter which could only be dealt with by the Council, which was responsible for the maintenance of public order. Moreover, although Buckingham was Lord Lieutenant of Middlesex, he exercised no national jurisdiction over the Trained Bands.

Just as the Council's authority was needed to suppress mutiny, so too it was useful during the large-scale impressment of mariners. In the 1620s the Council frequently established press quotas for the maritime

123 P.R.O., SP16/68/15, [27 June?], Buckingham to Nicholas. On the other hand, it is significant that the directions took the form of an instruction from the Lord Admiral himself.

124 P.R.O., SP16/390/104, 17 May 1638, Officers to Nicholas. See also SP16/391/104, 105, 109.

125 A.P.C. 1626, pp. 34-7, 40, 43-4, 101; P.R.O., SP16/30/48, 59; SP16/31/112, 112.1.

shires and ports.¹²⁶ It also provided pressmasters with letters of assistance directed to local magistrates.¹²⁷ Both the establishment of quotas and the issue of letters of assistance were matters which necessarily lay outside the Admiralty's jurisdiction. Letters of assistance gave the Navy authority over civilian officials whose obedience the Lord Admiral could not otherwise command, while Council quotas perhaps served to restrict impressment in the interests of the maritime economy, which the Navy had little incentive to do itself.

The Council's authority was also often needed in matters relating to the Navy's finances, since finance, like impressment and the suppression of mutiny, was not a matter which solely concerned the Navy. The proper place to debate an increase in seamen's wages, for example, was the Council table.¹²⁸ During the war years of the 1620s, when the government was forever short of money, the Council's intervention was often welcomed by the Lord Admiral. This was especially the case in 1626, when Buckingham was under parliamentary pressure to explain the Navy's failure to defend merchant shipping against the attacks of the Dunkirkers. Not only could Councillors interrogate the Lord Treasurer with a view to obtaining badly needed funds for the Navy, but the Council chamber also provided the Duke with an arena in which to lay the blame on the Exchequer.¹²⁹

The Council sometimes played a remedial role in naval affairs. When

126 Most notably *A.P.C. 1623-5*, p.499; *A.P.C. 1625-6*, pp.29-30.

127 *A.P.C. 1625-6*, pp.28-9, 179-80, 408; *A.P.C. 1626*, pp.13-4; *A.P.C. 1627*, pp.146, 398, 500; *A.P.C. 1627-8*, pp.4, 37-8, 44-5, 49, 360-1.

128 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy', pp.111-2; P.R.O., SP16/11/64; *A.P.C. 1625-6*, pp.198, 337; *A.P.C. 1626*, pp.248-51; P.R.O., PC2/44 fo.152.

129 P.R.O., SP16/25/7, [17?] April 1626, memorandum by Nicholas; *A.P.C. 1626*, 19 April 1626, pp.440-1. For a discussion of both these documents, see Thrush, 'Naval Finance' (forthcoming).

Northumberland took his complaints to the Council rather than to the Admiralty in November 1636, he shortened rather than subverted the administrative process. In 1618 and 1626, conciliar authority had established commissions of enquiry into the Navy. The Special Commissioners appointed in 1626 did not submit a written report, but their predecessors delivered their findings to the King at a meeting of the Council.¹³⁰ However, the remedial function assumed by the Council should not be overstressed. In 1626 and 1636 at least the Council responded to pressure for reform from the Lord Admiral.¹³¹ The Council initiated remedial action itself only once. This was in 1632, following the Navy's failure to prevent the raid on the Irish town of Baltimore the previous year by north African pirates. In July 1631 the Admiralty had already taken an important step towards improving the quality of naval defence in the Irish Sea when it stripped Admiral Sir Thomas Button of the right to victual the ships under his command.¹³² However, the following March the Council stepped in after it had received a report from the Irish Lords Justices criticising Button's subordinate, Capt. Francis Hooke, for his negligence. Fearing a repetition of the Baltimore disaster, the Council decided to reinforce the Irish Guard.¹³³ Over the following few months the task of seeing that the ships already in service were fitted out more promptly was dealt with by the Council

130 *A.P.C. 1618-9*, pp.288-9. On the origins of the 1626 Special Commission, see *A.P.C. 1626*, pp.338-9, 350-1. It was originally proposed that the 1626 Commission should be comprised exclusively of Privy Councillors, rather than the combination of Councillors & naval experts eventually chosen: see P.R.O., SP16/37/47.

131 The origins of the 1618 Commission are evidently obscure: McGowan *Commissions of Enquiry*, pp.xvii-xviii.

132 P.R.O., SP63/252/96, 14 July 1631, Admiralty to Lords Justices. For Button's activities as a victualler, see below, pp.263-5.

133 P.R.O., PC2/51, p.451, order of 9 March 1632.

rather than by the Admiralty.¹³⁴

There was potentially plenty of scope for disputes with the Admiralty concerning matters which the Council believed lay permanently within its province. Yet such cases were rare. In April 1625 Devon's Vice-Admiral, Sir John Eliot, who was then a staunch Buckingham supporter, challenged the validity of an order to press mariners in his county because it had been issued by the Council rather than by the Duke.¹³⁵ It does not necessarily detract from the point Eliot was making that he himself later condemned Coke for doing precisely the same thing. The major difficulty with Eliot's criticism lies in establishing that the Council was not entitled to issue press warrants. Buckingham often issued warrants solely on his own authority, but neither he nor his successors ever seem to have disputed those issued by the Council.¹³⁶ In this matter at least, the authority of Buckingham and the Privy Council evidently overlapped.

Where lines of authority between different areas of government were not always clear, this could sometimes lead to confusion. In 1637 a bemused Sir John Pennington was rebuked for having replied to a letter from the Privy Council before he had first sent his answer to the Admiralty. Professing himself 'not soe good a stats man or courtier as to place all things right', Pennington not unreasonably added that 'I

134 *C.S.P.I.*, 1625-32, pp.645,664,668-9,671-2. The Commissioners were not excluded, but they were obliged to liaise with the Council: P.R.O., SP16/214/82, Admiralty agenda, 29 March 1632; SP16/475 fo.293, Admiralty minutes, 26 June 1632.

135 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.13, 2 April 1625, Sir George Chudleigh to Bagg.

136 For examples of warrants issued by the Duke on his own authority, see Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fos.60v-61v,63,71r-v,108,120,126. For an example of 4 Council press warrants issued with Buckingham's obvious consent, see *A.P.C. 1628-9*, pp.53-4; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64897 fo.58, 25 July 1628, Buckingham to Coke.

had thought I had done well in returninge to ye counsell board answer to there letter'.¹³⁷ In the later 1630s Pennington also found it difficult to fathom the precise scope of the authority of the two Secretaries of State in relation to the Navy. Between 1628 and 1638 there was little possibility for confusion, because both Secretaries were Admiralty Commissioners. However, after Northumberland was appointed Lord Admiral in March 1638, the Secretaries were only entitled to issue naval orders which came directly from the King. Initially, at least, Pennington appears not to have grasped this, although it was apparently spelled out to him, for in December 1638 the Admiralty Secretary, Thomas Smith, chastised him for having obeyed a warrant from Secretary Coke 'contrary to what my Llord formerly writt unto you'.¹³⁸ Pennington was bitter at this treatment, but he nevertheless learned his lesson. Ten months later he politely refused to comply with an instruction from Secretary Windebank on the grounds that he had been ordered to obey no-one but the King and the Lord Admiral.¹³⁹

The question about the Secretaries is not whether they possessed authority over the Lord Admiral, but whether he possessed any authority over them. Precisely this issue was raised in June 1628, when Secretary Coke found himself in charge of the preparation of the fleet at Portsmouth. Having previously led the Navy Commission, he was the ideal man for the job. However, Coke was conscious of his humiliating position, protesting to Buckingham that it was 'not agreeable to the king's honor that his Secretarie should becu[m] a clerck to the officers

137 P.R.O., SP16/371/41, 6 Nov. 1637, Pennington to [Nicholas]. I am grateful to Sabrina Baron for valuable discussions about this, & other matters relating to the Council.

138 P.R.O., SP16/404/50, 10 Dec. 1638, Smith to Pennington.

139 P.R.O., SP16/430/25, 4 Oct. 1639.

of his Navie'.¹⁴⁰ His colleague, Secretary Conway, not only agreed, but asked Buckingham to raise the matter at the Council table, promising also 'if cause be to moove his Majestie if he forbidd it or prevent it not'.¹⁴¹ A difficult situation was only avoided after Buckingham wrote a soothing letter to Coke in which he described the Secretary's efforts at Portsmouth as indispensable.¹⁴²

The Admiralty's relationship with Ireland's Lord Deputy was rather more straightforward than its relationship with the Secretaries of State. It never conceded that, in regard to the ships of the Irish Guard, the Lord Deputy occupied anything other than a subordinate position. This was not always readily accepted by the Lord Deputy, however. Despite having conceded the need to defer to Buckingham in Admiralty affairs in 1624, Falkland was so dissatisfied with the performance of the commanders of the ships serving off Ireland the following year that he endeavoured to discipline them himself. Buckingham proved sympathetic towards Falkland's complaint, but unyielding on the question of accountability:

Albeit I hould not myself tyed to give yor Lo[r]dshipp an Account (as yow clayme) of any of his Majesties ships w[hil]ch are sent into Ireland, nor to cause ye captaines to acquaint yow w[ith] their instruccons, yet att yor instance I caused a due examinacon to be taken of yor Lo[r]dshippes complaints.¹⁴³

When in August 1627 the King said that he wanted one of the ships which were to be sent to Ireland to be directly subject to the Lord Deputy, he was probably endeavouring to provide a temporary alternative command structure during Buckingham's absence at Ré rather than seeking to

140 P.R.O., SP16/106/26, 4 June 1628.

141 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64896 fo.92, 25 June 1628, Conway to Coke.

142 *Ibid.*, fo.51, 10 June 1628, Buckingham to Coke.

143 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 37816 fo.33, 25 June 1625.

undermine the Duke's authority.'¹⁴⁴

The creation of a separate Irish naval establishment at Kinsale in 1636/7 at the instigation of Lord Deputy Wentworth did not alter the Admiralty's control over its Irish affairs. A series of wrangles with the Navy Board over the cost of the Irish Guard convinced Wentworth by November 1634 that the best way to reduce costs was to man, provision and winter the ships in Ireland.'¹⁴⁵ Significantly, the King only endorsed Wentworth's plan on the proviso that Kinsale 'be subordinate and accountable to the Admiralty here, for...I do not hold it fit to sever the jurisdiction of the sea'.¹⁴⁶ Lurking behind this desire to preserve the Admiralty's authority intact was also the fear that an autonomous Irish naval establishment would threaten Ireland's colonial relationship with England. Thus in 1635 Coke told Wentworth that 'if any way can be propounded to settle a fit Proportion of shipping there without dividing the Admiralties and the Dependence of that kingdom, both his Majesty and the Commissioners will be willing to imbrace such [a] Proposition'.¹⁴⁷ For Charles and for Coke, the issue of Admiralty control was inseparable from the preservation of English hegemony.

Scotland, unlike Ireland, was not an English colony, however much Charles I behaved as though it was. For that reason the Scottish Admiralty was entirely separate from its English counterpart. When in 1626 a small Scottish Navy was reconstituted following its disappearance in 1603, it owed its allegiance to the Earl of Linlithgow, the Scottish Lord Admiral during the minority of the Duke of Lennox, rather than to

144 P.R.O., SP16/74/93, 24 Aug. 1627, Conway to Privy Council.

145 C.S.P.I. 1633-47, pp.83-4, Nov. 1634, Wentworth to Admiralty.

146 *Strafforde's Letters*, i. 365, 26 Jan. 1635, Charles to Wentworth.

147 *Ibid.*, p.424, 25 May 1635.

Buckingham. So separate were the two establishments, that when ships of either Navy met, they were instructed to treat each other as if they belonged 'to a forrane prince'.¹⁴⁸

Unlike the power exercised by Buckingham, or even by his successors, Linlithgow's authority was remarkably slight. In July 1626 the King made the Earl Marischal admiral of the Scottish squadron.¹⁴⁹ In England such an appointment would not have been viewed as prejudicial to the Lord Admiral's authority, but in this case it led to a dispute. Marischal's commission had been issued on the understanding that he maintained the ships out of his own pocket, recouping himself from the proceeds of any prizes he captured.¹⁵⁰ Marischal, however, declined to put the ships to sea, 'notwithstanding of diverse letters wrettin to him by his Majestie for setting to sea for preserving of the merchant trade spoyled by Dunkirkers'.¹⁵¹ This proved too much for Linlithgow. Unable to revoke Marischal's grant, he offered to fund the ships himself.¹⁵² The matter was duly referred to the King, who, despite Marischal's dereliction of duty, found in his favour in August 1627 on the absurd grounds that Linlithgow's grant as Lord Admiral (12 January 1627) post-dated Marischal's commission as commander of the ships.¹⁵³ Linlithgow was probably forced to buy out Marischal as a result.

Linlithgow was subjected to further humiliation the following year by Leith's self-important water-bailiff, Archibald Tod. Returning from sea

148 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 23110 fo.65v, 22 Nov. 1626, [Charles to Sir William Alexander?].

149 *Ibid.*, fo.38, 12 July 1626, [Charles to Marischal].

150 *R.P.C.S.*, I: 1625-7, p.580, 25 April 1627, Charles to Scottish Privy Council.

151 *Ibid.*, pp.489,571-2.

152 *R.P.C.S.*, II: 1627-8, pp.25-6.

153 *Ibid.*, p.55, 17 Aug. 1627, Charles to Scottish Privy Council. For Linlithgow's grant, see Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 23110 fo.74.

in the leaky *Unicorn*, Linlithgow endeavoured to moor her in Leith harbour, but was prevented from doing so by Tod, who claimed sole right over 'shoare and harbourie' himself. An angry Linlithgow replied that if the Lord High Admiral of Scotland 'had not the power to lay to the shoare one of his Majesteis shippes whair ever the sea ebbes or flowes' then 'his power was verie small'.¹⁵⁴ For his impudence, which delayed repairs to the point that the *Unicorn* proved irreparable, the King later ordered Tod to be fined.¹⁵⁵ Charles also instructed one Alexander Hay of Leith to investigate Edinburgh's assumption of Admiralty rights, which reduced the Lord Admiral to 'ane mere cyfer', but whether Hay's report initiated further action is not known.¹⁵⁶

South of the border, the term cipher can only really be applied with any justification to Northumberland. His persistent ill-health threatened to expose the Admiralty to the domination of others. Three months after the Earl was made Lord Admiral, Nicholas told Pennington that Northumberland was so incapacitated by illness that 'ye place of Lo[rd] Adm[irall] is in a manner totally & soly managed by Mr. Comptroller'.¹⁵⁷ This was a reference to the Comptroller of the King's Household, the elder Sir Henry Vane. A meagre archive makes it impossible to confirm Nicholas' assertion, but Vane is known to have used his influence with Northumberland to secure the appointment of his son and namesake as joint Navy Treasurer in January 1639.¹⁵⁸

154 *Ibid.*, pp.451-5, 24 Sept. 1627, Linlithgow's complaint to the Scottish Privy Council.

155 *R.P.C.S.*, III: 1629-30, p.353, 11 May 1629, Charles to Scottish Privy Council (read 19 Nov.).

156 *Ibid.*, p.661, art.73 of 89 articles of wrongs committed by Edinburgh, submitted by Hay, 1629.

157 P.R.O., SP16/393/29, 20 June 1638.

158 Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, I. 249.

Northumberland was ultimately reduced to a non-entity through choice rather than through ill health. John Pym's revelation in the Commons of the existence of an Army Plot at the beginning of May 1641 was the catalyst. As one of the plotters was Northumberland's brother, Henry Percy, the Earl needed to clear his own name.¹⁵⁹ The news that there was not only a plot to subvert the northern army, but also a suspected French plan to land troops at Portsmouth, where they would be met by the Queen, provided Northumberland with the opportunity he needed to distance himself from his brother's actions. Approached by the Commons to put the ships at Portsmouth on alert, and to appoint only trustworthy commanders, Northumberland readily agreed.¹⁶⁰

However, the willingness with which Northumberland continued to subordinate his authority to the Long Parliament is striking. In June he declined to convey instructions to Pennington 'till I receive order therein from the Parliament'.¹⁶¹ Before visiting Bath in August, where he went to take the waters, Northumberland instructed his secretary, Thomas Smith, to acquaint the parliament 'with any thing that comes from sea worthy their knowledge'.¹⁶² Northumberland's willingness to work with the Commons' Navy Committee was acknowledged by its spokesman, Giles Green. In February 1642 Green averred that he had 'expressed all the Aid and Assistance unto the Committee that could be expected'.¹⁶³ Viewed purely in naval terms, this was extraordinary, for parliamentary

159 Northumberland obtained a confession from Henry in return for letting him escape: Conrad Russell 'The First Army Plot of 1641', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xxxviii (1988), p.86.

160 *Journals of the House of Lords, 1628-42*, iv. 239-40; *Commons' Journals*, ii. 140.

161 P.R.O., SP16/481/5, 2 June 1641, Northumberland to Pennington.

162 P.R.O., SP16/483/62, 17 Aug. 1641, Smith to [Pennington]. Smith's letter shows that Pennington had mis-directed his despatches again.

163 *Commons' Journals*, ii. 413.

assumption of executive authority over the Navy was unprecedented. However, unlike Buckingham, whose political interests had been inseparable from those of the King, Northumberland's sympathies lay with those in the Long Parliament who sought political and religious reform.

Northumberland's conduct altered the chief unspoken question concerning the government of the Navy. Before 1641 the question had been whether the Lord Admiral would succeed in asserting his position as head of the Navy's executive. By 1642, however, the issue was whether or not he owed primary allegiance to the King. For Northumberland found himself in an increasingly difficult situation. On the one hand, he still wished to obey Charles. When in March 1642 he asked the Commons to consider setting to sea the first rate *Prince Royal* in place of two smaller ships, it was clear that he was acting on the King's direction.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, he was unwilling to do anything which threatened the parliament. Thus in February 1642 he questioned the King's letter requiring him to provide a fleet to transport to Holland the Queen and Princess Mary because he rightly suspected that their mission was far from innocent.¹⁶⁵ Viewed from the King's perspective, the wonder is not that Charles sacked Northumberland when he did, but that he did not do so sooner.¹⁶⁶

164 *Private Journals*, 7 Mar. to 1 June, p.4.

165 P.R.O., SP16/489/14, 8 Feb. 1642, Smith to Pennington. The ostensible purpose of the journey was to take Princess Mary to her new husband, the Prince of Orange. In fact, the Queen went to buy arms.

166 He had been urged to remove him 'by the feminine gender' (the Queen?) as early as Dec. 1641: P.R.O., SP16/486/36, 10 Dec. 1641, Smith to [Pennington].

Chapter 2

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE YARDS

I. The Navy Board: The Structure of Government

Just as the composition of the Navy's senior executive shifted and changed in the early seventeenth century, so too did the size and character of the Navy Board. The most striking alteration occurred in 1618. In place of the four Principal Officers, who had administered the yards since the creation of a permanent Navy by Henry VIII, a twelve man Navy Commission was installed. The Principal Officers were restored in 1628, but their membership was widened in 1630-1 by the addition of two Assistant Officers, though one soon withdrew from naval affairs and was not replaced. The yards continued to be governed by Officers until the Civil War, when they were once more replaced by Commissioners.

Changes in the composition of the Navy Board were marked indeed, but they might have been even more profound. The restoration of the Principal Officers in 1628 briefly opened up the prospect of a major change in the Board's leadership. In theory, the senior Principal Officer was the Lieutenant of the Admiralty, or Vice-Admiral of England as he was sometimes called. In practice, the Lieutenant had ceased to play an active role in the running of the Navy by the end of the sixteenth century. Between 1604 and 1618 there was no Lieutenant at all. This may have had something to do with the Navy's corrupt Treasurer, Sir Robert Mansell, whose control over his colleagues would have been threatened by a Lieutenant. Ironically, the Lieutenantcy was conferred on Mansell himself in 1618, after he had resigned the treasurership. At first Mansell may not have minded the fact that he occupied a purely

honorary position, for he was not entirely excluded from naval affairs. In 1620-1 he commanded the expedition to Algiers, while in 1624 he was accorded membership of the Council of War. However, this latter experience proved particularly humiliating. His advice on the prosecution of the war against Spain went unheeded, for which he attempted to revenge himself in the second session of the 1625 parliament.¹ By March 1626 it was reported that Mansell felt himself 'generally neglected by all men in presentt Employments'.² Mansell was powerless to revive his flagging fortunes unless he could resuscitate the Lieutenancy, but he could not do this while the Navy Commission continued. The dissolution of the Commission in February 1628 provided him with his chance. Not only did he declare that he would sit with the other Principal Officers, but in July 1628 he laid the necessary groundwork for just such a move by effecting a reconciliation with Buckingham.³ Considerations of age, Buckingham's assassination seven weeks later, and the elevation of his old antagonist Sir John Coke to the Admiralty Commission, perhaps explain why Mansell's hopes of restoring the Lieutenancy to its former importance were dashed. Thereafter, Mansell's activities were restricted to the christening of ships, the listing of London's mariner population in 1629, and to a leading consultative role in 1632-3 in a dispute over manning levels.⁴

The thwarting of Mansell's aspirations to head the Navy Board merely confirmed the seniority of the Navy's Treasurer. At Board meetings the

1 *Proceedings in Parliament*, 1625, 453, 472-4, 476-7, 480-1.

2 P.R.O., SP16/23/76, 26 Mar. 1626, Button to Pennington.

3 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64897 fo.11, 3 July 1628, Nicholas to Coke.

4 *Phineas Pett*, pp.157,166-7; P.R.O., SP16/135/38, 12 Feb. 1629, London muster; P.R.O., SP16/475 fos. 290-1v, 27 April 1632, Admiralty meeting; P.R.O., SP16/221/7, 19 July 1632, Mansell to Pennington.

Treasurer's colleagues waited until he was seated before they commenced business, and it was he who signed all documents first.⁵ His signature always occupied the position of precedence on the page, on the extreme left, with those of his colleagues next to his in descending order of importance. Unlike his fellow Officers, he had the use of a chapel, which adjoined his house at Deptford.⁶ An unsuccessful attack on his precedence was mounted in 1630-1 by the Surveyor, Sir Thomas Aylesbury. His challenge was grounded, however, on the basis that his baronetcy pre-dated that of his rival, Sir William Russell.⁷

Second in seniority to the Treasurer stood the Comptroller, who countersigned the Treasurer's accounts ahead of his colleagues. According to Dr. McGowan the Comptroller was technically senior to the other three Officers, but if this had been true of an earlier period it was certainly no longer the case.⁸ Third in line came the Surveyor, followed lastly by the Clerk. The Clerk's full title was Clerk of the Navy or Clerk of the Records. Under Samuel Pepys this Officer was styled the Clerk of the Acts, and he became the dominant figure in the Navy Board, but in the early seventeenth century this transformation was unforeseeable. Indeed, in the mid-Jacobean period there were murmurings that the Clerk should not be counted as an Officer at all, because his responsibilities were more administrative than executive.⁹

The Surveyor of Marine Victuals was traditionally excluded from the

5 P.R.O., SP16/183/2, Jan. 1631, Russell to Admiralty.

6 P.R.O., Elxchequerl 351/2281, (1638 account), n.f., payment to Richard Butler to repaint the King's arms in the chapel.

7 P.R.O., SP16/184/25. For Russell's response, see SP16/185/63, & n.5 above. For the importance of this dispute, see below, p.88.

8 *Commissions of Enquiry*, p. xiii.

9 Longleat, Coventry Papers, 117 fo.3v, 'Observations of the Navy by Mr. Kenrick Edisbury, Surveyor'. Misdated 1630; written pre-1618.

Navy Board. This rule was broken by the King in April 1625 when he added Sir Allen Apsley to the list of Navy Commissioners, probably because it made sense during wartime that the Victualler and the Commissioners should hold joint meetings. The dissolution of the Commission signalled the end of the Victualler's new-found status, although shortly after Apsley's death in 1630 the Officers were instructed to receive his successor, Sir Sampson Darrell, 'into their Society'.¹⁰ It seems likely, however, that this simply meant that they were told to extend a warm welcome to Darrell, for there is no evidence that Darrell ever sat with the Officers, nor was he ever regarded as one of them.

The individual functions of the Principal Officers were not always entirely clear to contemporaries, perhaps not even to the Officers themselves. In 1638 the Navy's Paymaster asserted that it was not easy to determine the duties of each Officer, 'time, favour, ignorance and alteration of persons and manners of government hath so blurred the memory of their first institution'.¹¹ There was undoubtedly some truth in this, but the general responsibilities of each Officer were well established and well known. The Treasurer received and issued the funds allocated to the Navy, usually with the exception of money earmarked for the Victualler and Ordnance Office, and he also collated and submitted for inspection the department's financial records. The task of keeping an eye on his accounts, and those of the Victualler, fell to the Comptroller, who kept separate books of controlment with both. In addition, each year he was supposed to audit the accounts of the Navy's storekeepers. Annual surveys of the ships, storehouses and docks were

10 P.R.O., SP16/156 (contents listing of a missing Admiralty out-letter book, 1628-30), fo. 61.

11 *Holland's Discourses*, p.10.

the responsibility of the Surveyor. He also saw to the inspection and provision of stores, and generally oversaw building and repair work. In theory there was no overlap between the Surveyor's task of inspecting the stores and the Comptroller's job of checking receipts and issues, but it made sense that the Comptroller was required to vouch for the accuracy of the Surveyor's books at Officer meetings. Lastly, the Clerk kept the records of Officer meetings, acted as a purveyor and reported on prices to his colleagues. This division of responsibility seems to have satisfied everyone except the aged seaman Sir William Monson, who suggested that the offices of Comptroller and Clerk should be combined, and that the Surveyorship should be split in two.¹²

As well as pursuing their individual responsibilities, the Principal Officers or their Commissioners were required to meet at least twice a week to discuss the state of the ships and magazine, the government and payment of the workforce, and anything else which had a bearing on the day-to-day running of the yards. Despite their inequality in status, the Officers were obliged to reach decisions at meetings on the basis of a simple majority, 'noe man takeing upon him any Preheminnence or (sic) overrule his fellowes'.¹³ Whether meetings really were this democratic is a question to which the evidence affords no answer.

II. The Navy Board: Administrative Constraints

A meeting house, complete with housekeeper, had long been provided for the Navy Board on Chatham Hill. Before 1627, however, the Board had no office in London, where its members often waited on the Admiralty. Until

¹² *Monson's Tracts*, iii. 416-7.

¹³ Brit. Lib., Sloane MS. 3232 fo.141.

1626 the Navy Commissioners successfully circumvented the problem by meeting in each other's homes. However, attacks by unpaid seamen on their houses led the Commissioners to approach Buckingham in November 1627 for a London office.¹⁴ The Duke agreed, and thereafter the Commissioners met in a rented house in Whitehart Street.¹⁵

The utility of a London office was evident, even after the threat of mariner violence had evaporated. In 1628 and 1629 the newly restored Principal Officers met in a house in St. Martin's Lane, although the arrangement may have been only semi-official.¹⁶ However, in March 1630 the Admiralty approved the payment of rent for a property in Mincing Lane on the grounds that a London base would reduce the Officers' travelling charges.¹⁷ Situated close to Tower Hill, the new office must also have made rapid communication with the Victualler possible.

On the face of it, the acquisition of a London office was a marked improvement on the use of private lodgings. However, according to Robert Slingsby, who worked as a clerk between 1628 and 1631, the office proved so small that there was seldom more than one Officer in residence. Lack of space meant that each Officer stored his books at home. Records which were less accessible for inspection were therefore 'more superficially kept'.¹⁸ The observation is significant if it is true.

Financial accounts for the mid-1630s suggest that there was no space

14 P.R.O., SP16/85/58, 28 Nov. 1627.

15 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.144v, 1 Dec. 1627, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649A fo.181, payment to Wm. Anas. The Commissioners evidently moved in on 29 Sept. 1627, before they wrote to Buckingham. Whitehart Street may have been modern-day Hart Street.

16 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649A fo.116v, payment to Richard Alport.

17 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.178, 16 Mar. 1630, Admiralty to Principal Officers.

18 *Hollond's Discourses*, p.357. Slingsby was writing in 1660.

in the London office for the Treasurer.¹⁹ Instead, he used another house in Tower Street, which until 1637 he either owned or rented himself.²⁰ If this was an attempt to ameliorate the problem of overcrowding, it proved only partly successful. In 1633 an anonymous writer proposed that the Navy's records, which required 'much roome to place them orderlie', should be shifted across the road to the victualling houses on Tower Hill, the former Abbey of Graces. The King ordered this suggestion to be investigated in 1635, and also the possibility of moving the Officers' lodgings there.²¹ However, the Abbey was in such a state of disrepair that it was not until 1649 that the parliamentary Navy Commissioners moved in. This did not prove successful though, for they evidently found being near the slaughterhouses so unbearable that a house in Seething Lane was bought for them five years later.²²

The problem of overcrowding was exacerbated by understaffing.²³ In 1638 the Paymaster John Hollond argued that there were too few Principal Officers to control the yards firmly. How was it possible, he asked, for the Officers to be at Chatham, Deptford, Woolwich and Portsmouth at the same time? According to Dr. McGowan the Officers were represented in the yards by the Clerk of the Cheque,²⁴ but there is no evidence that this official was ever considered the Officers' proxy. On the contrary, at

19 The 1634-6 Treasurer's accounts mention lodging space for 4 Officers (Pett, Fleming, Edisbury & Palmer): P.R.O., E351/2273, 2274, 2277.

20 P.R.O., SP16/215/24, SP16/316/85. The house was officially rented in 1637: P.R.O., E351/2279, payment to Thomas Salter.

21 P.R.O., SP16/279/31, undated index to map of victualling houses; *C.S.P.D. 1635*, p.315.

22 On the Abbey's decay, see below, pp.256-7. On the parliamentary Navy Commissioners, see Oppenheim, *Administration of the Royal Navy*, p.349.

23 For the problem of understaffing at the lower levels of the administration, see below, pp.103,115.

24 McGowan, *The Royal Navy*, p.196.

Portsmouth in 1635 the Clerk, John Brooke, and his brother Francis, were accused of jeering at the Officers' warrants, for which John was expelled.²⁵ The truth was that, except at Chatham, where there was normally a member of the Navy Board in residence, there was no senior yard officer, and thus

for want of one to act in a power beyond all subordinate ministers attending in each yard respectively, all men take liberty to do what they list...and the officers are sure never to hear of any abuses till they fall out among themselves and betray one another.²⁶

It was almost certainly Hollond who went on to propose the establishment of three new Assistant Principal Officers to reside at Chatham, Deptford and Portsmouth.²⁷ An even more ambitious suggestion along similar lines had been voiced by Capt. Richard Gifford in 1627. He had wanted to create miniature Navy Boards responsible for their own squadrons in each yard.²⁸ Couched as an accompaniment to a suggested major expansion of the Navy, Gifford's idea can also be read as a criticism of the existing administrative structure.

Ironically, the effects of staff shortage probably first became evident during the final eight months of Buckingham's Navy Commission. Indeed, they may have created the circumstances which led to the dissolution of the Commission on 21 February 1628. This finding is not

25 This is necessarily an over-simplification of a complex case. John alleged that the Officers wanted to get rid of him because he had refused to sign blank bills made out by Edisbury. He also believed that his brother was on the verge of surrendering the stores to Edisbury's clerk, Edward Heyward. Edisbury, however, said that he had never wronged John, that he had 'laboured his good for his father's sake' (the late Clerk, Matthew Brooke), but that John had threatened to kill him. See P.R.O., SP16/297/7, SP16/303/76, SP16/304/11,39, SP16/317/108, SP16/313/3.

26 *Hollond's Discourses*, p.83.

27 Bod. Libr., MS. Rawl. A192 'A ballance of an Augmentacon of meanes to all Ministers in the Navy', (1639), 1,3,14.

28 P.R.O., SP16/54/9, 15 Feb. 1627.

readily apparent. When the King apologised to Buckingham on 1 October 1627 for the delay in resupplying the Duke's forces on the Ile de Ré, he referred to the 'slow proceedings of the commissioners of the navy (which all commissioners are subject to)'.²⁹ Indeed, the cumbersome nature of the Commission was cited as the primary reason for its revocation four and a half months later.³⁰ Yet the assertion that the Commission was unwieldy is the exact opposite of the truth.

In June 1625 there were thirteen Commissioners. By the autumn of 1627, however, the number of active members had been drastically reduced. Sir Thomas Smyth and Sir William Heydon had died and had not been replaced. A further five Commissioners, - Sir Richard Weston, Sir Robert Pye, Sir John Osborne, Richard Sutton and Francis Gofton - were Exchequer officials, whose own department's affairs may have prevented them from assuming an active role.³¹ Sir Allen Apsley fell ill during the Ré expedition and never sat with his colleagues again, while Sir John Coke, who had been appointed Secretary of State in September 1625, was so divorced from the daily proceedings of his colleagues that in December 1626 he was included in the special commission which was set up to investigate their efficiency.³² This left just Sir John Wolstenholme, Sir William Russell, William Burrell and Denis Fleming to conduct

29 *Hardwicke Misc. State Paper*,, 11. 17.

30 *A.P.C. 1627-8*, 308.

31 Osborne did attend meetings on 20 Jan. & 15 Feb. 1628 though: P.R.O., SP16/91/19, SP16/93/44,45. Gofton may have suffered failing health in 1627 (he died in 1629). In July 1627 he wrote from his home in Stockwell that he seldom came into London 'but uppon great busynes'. See Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 29,974, vol.1. fo.99. I am grateful to Sabrina Baron for reference to this volume.

32 On Apsley's ill health, see P.R.O., SP16/86/54, 11 Dec. 1627, Apsley to Nicholas. For a list of the Special Navy Commissioners, see P.R.O., SP16/45, fo.3.

business.³³ The only assistance these four men could expect was provided by the Treasurer, Sir Sackville Crowe,³⁴ and by the 'Assistant of the Survey' at Chatham, Joshua Downing. However, neither of these officers was a Navy Commissioner, and Downing at least believed that this undermined his authority.³⁵ Thus, by the autumn of 1627 the Commission's effective strength had been reduced to one third. Unfortunately, neither Charles nor Buckingham thought to expand the Navy Commission. Yet, while Buckingham was at Ré, the King had sent Sir Henry Mainwaring to Plymouth to take charge of the preparations there, presumably because he realised that the Commissioners were overstretched.³⁶

The restoration of the Principal Officers in February 1628 was hardly bound to improve matters, even if they had been as competent as their immediate predecessors, for there were only four of them. The Officers were Sir Sackville Crowe (Treasurer), Sir Guilford Slingsby (Comptroller), Sir Thomas Aylesbury (Surveyor) and the former Navy Commissioner Denis Fleming (Clerk). This number was no longer adequate during peacetime, and in 1628 the country was still at war. In Elizabethan times it had been assumed that the Principal Officers would not be able to deal with all the business pertinent to their places. They were therefore accorded the services of three 'Assistants of the Admiralty', each of whom was paid an annual fee of £20. By the beginning

33 P.R.O., SP16/75/32,48, SP16/77/14, SP16/80/47, SP16/83/4, SP16/84/99,100, SP16/85/58,65,73, SP16/86/1,29,42,43,53,80,92, SP16/87/6,21,30,31,53,65, SP16/90/2,12,25,31,57,97,113,123,124, SP16/91/1,2,4,4.1,19,48,88, SP16/92/30,38,51,62,77,83, SP16/93/44,45,63,65. At 2 meetings Russell's place was taken by Edmund Sawyer [the Exchequer auditor?]: P.R.O., SP16/85/31; *T.H.D.T.*, 1609-35, ed. G.G. Harris, no.304, p.89.

34 P.R.O., SP16/79/28, 25 Sept. 1627, Crowe to Nicholas; *T.H.D.T.*, no.299, p.88, 11 Oct. 1627, Crowe & Russell to Trinity House.

35 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.31, 27 April 1625, Downing to Coke.

36 P.R.O., SP16/78/50, 18 Sept. 1627, Charles to Mainwaring.

of the seventeenth century, however, these posts were sinecures, 'in respect of the Officers' jealousies to have competitors than for want of employment fit to further the King's service'.³⁷ In 1625 they were formally abolished because they were believed to be unnecessary.³⁸

Fortunately, their abolition simply meant that no future appointments could be made; it did not entail the revocation of the existing patent held by Kenrick Edisbury.³⁹ Edisbury was an industrious and intelligent man, who had only lost his job as Paymaster of the Navy in April 1627 by the resignation of the Treasurer, Sir William Russell. It therefore made sense to revitalise Edisbury's assistantship in 1628. However, there was also a more powerful motive to bring Edisbury back into the Navy's administration. Buckingham immediately regretted the restoration of the Principal Officers, since they were 'above their places in their imaginations, and for want of understanding in such business not able to execute the same'.⁴⁰ It is arguable that the revived Assistantship owed more to the deficiencies of the Principal Officers and to the remedial influence of Coke than it did to the question of staff shortage.

Buckingham's lack of faith in the new regime led him to despatch Coke to Portsmouth in May 1628 to co-ordinate the preparation of Lindsey's

37 *Monson's Tracts*, iii. 409.

38 P.R.O., E351/2263, preamble. Ironically, this same document created 2 assistantships to the Navy Commissioners. The place of Master Assistant went to the Master Attendant Walter Whiting, who died two months later. He was replaced as a Master Attendant, but there is no evidence that the post of Master Assistant was retained. The other assistant was known as the Assistant of the Survey and was granted to Joshua Downing.

39 Edisbury's patent was dated 11 Nov. 1618: *C.S.P.D. 1611-18*, 593. In theory, Sir Michael Geere, who died in 1630, was also an Admiralty Assistant. Although he continued to receive his salary from the Exchequer (P.R.O., E403/1740, n.f., payment of 25 April 1628) he remained a sinecurist.

40 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64897 fo.11, 3 July 1628, Nicholas to Coke.

fleet. Coke was an extremely able administrator, but he was only one man. In vain he had hoped that the Treasurer would lend him one of his clerks.⁴¹ Instead, Coke turned to Edisbury, who was wholly unassociated with the Navy Board. Over the next few months Edisbury acted as Coke's right-hand man at Portsmouth, pressing men and ships and taking up supplies.⁴² It soon became clear that Edisbury's primary role as an Admiralty Assistant was to provide an alternative channel of administration rather than an extra pair of hands. In 1628 he effectively displaced Crowe's Paymaster, John Harpur, on the Admiralty's orders.⁴³ The Comptroller and his clerks arrived at Chatham while Edisbury was paying off the mariners of Lindsey's fleet in November. His comment is telling: 'I pray god it proove noe hindrance'.⁴⁴

Between 1628 and 1630 Edisbury was actively involved in naval affairs in a wide capacity. In June 1629 Sir Sackville Crowe was temporarily suspended for alleged malfeasance. He was replaced by Sir Guilford Slingsby and by Edisbury, 'one of the Assistants of our Navye'.⁴⁵ Edisbury also served in an advisory capacity. When in November 1628 the Surveyor expressed his reservations about the wisdom of grounding the *Dreadnought*, Nicholas consulted Edisbury, who expressed a different view.⁴⁶ At least two memoranda were penned by Edisbury for the Admiralty

41 P.R.O., SP16/106/26, 4 June 1628, Coke to Buckingham.

42 P.R.O., SP16/106 fo.63; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64896 fo.39v, 6 June 1628, Edisbury to Coke.

43 In May Edisbury was told to 'assist' at all pays: P.R.O., SP16/156 fo.22, n.d. (date interpolated).

44 P.R.O., SP16/120/66, 9 Nov. 1628, Edisbury to Nicholas. See also *ibid.*, nos.60,60.1; P.R.O., SP16/121/74, SP16/122/17. The arrears of Edisbury's fee as an Admiralty Assistant, which had lapsed since 1625, were paid at this time: P.R.O., E403/1740, n.f., payments of 29 Oct., 26 Nov. 1628.

45 C.S.P.D., 1628-9, p.582; P.R.O., E351/2267, preamble. For Crowe's suspension, see below, p.91.

46 P.R.O., SP16/121/86, 28 Nov. 1628, Edisbury to Nicholas.

at this time, one in 1628 concerning the prevention of decay in the King's ships over the winter, and the other in January 1630, which criticised the adequacy of that year's Ordinary estimate.⁴⁷

Edisbury undoubtedly proved a useful alternative to the Officers, but he was never able to supplant them, nor was he their equal until he was appointed Surveyor in December 1632. Moreover, after January 1630 he was no longer able to execute the office of an assistant, for he was readmitted as Paymaster following Sir William Russell's reappointment as Treasurer. It was to solve the problem of an inept Navy Board once and for all that Coke approached William Burrell in February 1630 with the idea of adding him to the Board as an Officer without portfolio.⁴⁸

Burrell died before he could be formally added to the Officers' ranks. His place was taken by Coke's protégé, Sir Kenelm Digby, and the Master Shipwright Phineas Pett, who was included at the express command of the King.⁴⁹ During the early 1630s, however, there were only a few ships at sea each year, and it soon became clear that there was sufficient work for only one new Assistant Officer. In September 1632 Digby informed Coke from Deptford that 'I do nothing here, but please myself w^{it}h looking over a few books'.⁵⁰ When Digby's wife died the following year, he quietly withdrew from naval affairs altogether and was not replaced.⁵¹ Neither of the new Officers exercised any special function. For this reason their colleagues may never have been wholly reconciled

47 For the former, see Burlington House, Society of Antiquaries MS. 203, fo.9, 'State of the Navy', n.d. (This may be the missing enclosure to a letter to Nicholas of 14 Nov. 1628: P.R.O., SP16/120/66). For the criticism of the estimate, see P.R.O., SP16/158/74, 20 Jan. 1630.

48 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64900 fo.73, 8 Feb. 1630, paper by Coke.

49 For a lengthier discussion of this, see below, pp.89-90.

50 P.R.O., SP16/223/21, 12 Sept. 1632, Digby to Coke.

51 D.N.B., v. 967.

to the idea that they enjoyed parity of status. In 1634 a disgruntled Comptroller remarked of Pett that 'though he have the power of an officer, yett he executes the place but in nature of an assistant'.⁵² The fundamentally novel character of the new Assistants, as Officers rather than senior clerks, makes them the precursors of the Extra Commissioners of the Restoration.⁵³ Indeed, they were technically styled 'Commissioners' themselves.⁵⁴

By 1633 the Navy Board had been expanded to five members, following Digby's withdrawal. This was probably the minimum number who were needed when things were busy. It was thus a cause of concern that most of the Officers fell seriously ill in the later 1630s, at a time when they were at full stretch in providing for the needs of the Ship Money fleets.

The first member of the Navy Board to fall seriously ill was Denis Fleming. In the summer of 1636 he visited Bath in the vain hope of a cure for an affliction which had left him with a speech impediment.⁵⁵ It was not until June 1637, however, that his colleagues sought to have him replaced.⁵⁶ Nothing was done until the following January, when it was decided to appoint the Earl of Northumberland's servant, Thomas Barlow, as joint Clerk.⁵⁷ However, Fleming proved reluctant to relinquish any of his duties. He had initially wanted to resign his place to his friend

52 P.R.O., SP16/258/27, Reasons for increasing the Comptroller's salary, submitted to the Admiralty 7 Jan. 1634.

53 J.M. Collinge, *Office-Holding in Modern Britain vol. VII: Navy Board Officials, 1660-1832* (London, 1978), p.1.

54 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64900 fos.89-90, 2 Mar. 1630, Pett's draft patent; Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2541, fos. 174-180, Mar. 1631, draft instructions by Coke.

55 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64914 fo.73, 14 Dec. 1636, Fleming to Coke. Fleming may have suffered a mild stroke.

56 P.R.O., SP16/362/63, 28 June 1637, Fleming to Nicholas; SP16/63/40, 6 July 1637, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

57 C.S.P.D. 1637-8, p.195, 27 Jan. 1638.

and deputy Francis Williamson, probably in exchange for a financial payment, for Fleming would not have been entitled to a pension from the King.⁵⁸ As a courtier, however, Williamson proved unacceptable to Fleming's colleagues. This left Fleming with no alternative but to soldier on, for if his colleagues appointed someone else they were unlikely to buy out Fleming. Thus, as late as August 1638, Fleming continued to insist on discharging the duties of his office alone.⁵⁹ He was evidently forced out, however, and died in September 1639.⁶⁰

Fleming outlived the Surveyor Kenrick Edisbury by eleven months. There is no evidence to suggest that Edisbury's death was preceded by a long illness, but in 1626 and 1628 he was afflicted with a 'quartan ague', while in 1632 and 1634 he complained that his leg was swollen as a result of a fall aboard ship in 1618.⁶¹ Sir William Russell, too, suffered bouts of illness from at least 1626, when he was probably already well into middle age. In April 1627 he had stepped down as Treasurer, perhaps because of increasing ill health.⁶² Although he resumed office in 1630, he was soon troubled by gout. In August 1632 this was so bad that for a while he was unable to stand.⁶³ By 1638 his hands as well as his feet were affected.⁶⁴ This could not be ignored,

58 P.R.O., SP16/345/28, 28 Jan. 1637, Fleming to Coke; SP16/361/7, 3 June 1637, King to Admiralty; SP16/353 fo.35, 22 June 1637, Admiralty to Principal Officers.

59 P.R.O., SP16/397/94, 31 Aug. 1638, Smith to Pennington.

60 P.R.O., PROB[ATE] 11/181 fo.109v, proven 20 Sept. 1639.

61 P.R.O., SP16/19/42, SP16/121/74,86, SP16/222/60, SP16/260/29, SP16/263/72, SP16/272/72.

62 In July 1626 Russell said he could not attend the Lord Treasurer owing to illness. Two years later he believed he was about to die from his 'manie infirmities': Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64889 fo.67; Add. MS. 64896 fo. 90.

63 P.R.O., SP16/222/60, 30 Aug. 1632, Edisbury to Coke. See also SP16/271/51, SP16/337/53.

64 P.R.O., SP16/402/61, 27 Nov. 1638, Nicholas to Pennington.

and so Northumberland persuaded the King to appoint a more youthful man, the twenty-six year old Sir Henry Vane the younger, as joint Treasurer in January 1639.⁶⁵ Although Russell continued to remain active, he was soon overshadowed by the industrious but unpopular Vane.⁶⁶

Sir Henry Palmer also had a history of ill health. He had acquired the office of Comptroller relatively late in life, at the age of forty-nine in April 1631. In 1633 he twice suffered an attack of spleen, which on the first occasion at least confined him to his chambers for a few days.⁶⁷ In December 1639 he spent time recovering from an illness at his home near Canterbury, where he may have been since the summer of 1638. Although he claimed to be in reasonable health, he was worried that a sudden return to work would occasion a relapse.⁶⁸ For this reason, he agreed to share the duties of his office with a younger man, George Carteret.⁶⁹ Palmer was never well enough to return to his desk, however, and in 1641 he formally handed over his office to Carteret.⁷⁰

The effect of illness on the Navy Board is problematic. Operations must have been hampered, but there is no evidence to suppose that they were ever seriously impaired. An Officer who was too unwell to venture outside might still give good service from the comfort of his own home. In February 1634 Edisbury reported by letter that he had uncovered the widespread embezzlement of wood chips, although he was not well enough

65 *C.S.P.D. 1638-9*, p.307, 11 Jan. 1639; *H.M.C. Report on the MSS. of the Right Honourable Viscount De L'Isle V.C.*, vol. vi. (Sidney Papers, 1626-98), p.159, 15 Jan. 1639, Countess to Earl of Leicester.

66 P.R.O., SP16/425/46, 10 July 1639, Nicholas to Pennington.

67 P.R.O., SP16/233/24, 4 Mar. 1633, Edisbury to Coke; SP16/233/30, 5 Mar. 1633, Edisbury to Russell; SP16/248/22, 19 Oct. 1633, Edisbury to Nicholas.

68 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.353, 15 Dec. 1639, Palmer to Principal Officers; *Phineas Pett*, p.170.

69 P.R.O., SO3/12, Dec. 1639.

70 P.R.O., SP16/485/113, 25 Nov. 1641, Carteret to Pennington.

to travel to London himself.⁷¹ Likewise, while recuperating at home in 1639, Sir Henry Palmer continued to receive reports to read, comment upon and sign. In the later 1630s the incidence of serious illness undoubtedly increased, but the Admiralty responded by bolstering the Navy Board with additional members. There does not appear to be any correlation between physical infirmity and administrative inefficiency.

It was essential that members of the Navy Board should be well informed. For this reason the Board frequently sought specialist advice and assistance. It relied on two bodies to supplement the expertise of its own employees, the Trinity House of Deptford and the Corporation of Shipwrights, whose Hall was located at Ratcliffe. The role of Trinity House has sometimes been overstated, but the Corporation's historian rightly observes that its duties were 'executive as well as advisory'.⁷² In the war years of the 1620s a number of Trinity House men were employed as pressmasters. During the preparations for the 1625 expedition, members of the Corporation were especially active in naval administration. A team of Trinity House surveyors inspected victuals provided for the fleet in May,⁷³ while the following month four of the Corporation's brethren submitted a report to the Navy Commissioners concerning a mutiny aboard a merchantman in naval service. In their covering letter to the Admiralty Court Judge, the Commissioners explained that they employed Trinity House officials 'in settling his

71 P.R.O., SP16/260/29, 7 Feb. 1634, Edisbury to Nicholas. On the theft of chips, see below, pp.119-21.

72 G.G. Harris, *The Trinity House of Deptford, 1514-1660*, (London, 1969), p.219. G.E. Manwaring wrongly claimed that Trinity House ran Deptford yard & was responsible for victualling: *The Life and Works of Sir Henry Mainwaring*, 1. 296.

73 See below, pp.294-5.

Maljeslt[i]els service for this fleete'.⁷⁴ The previous December they had installed Joshua Downing at Chatham as the yard's overseer on the basis of his proven clerical expertise at Trinity House.⁷⁵

In theory it made sense for the Navy Board to seek the views of non-naval experts, who might be expected to offer an impartial assessment. Indeed, this was one reason why the crown had agreed to incorporate the shipwrights in 1605.⁷⁶ In practice, however, matters might be different. Outside ship surveyors were apparently expected to work unpaid, and this may have engendered a casual attitude. In August 1635 Edisbury complained that a number of Thames shipwrights had not appeared to survey some ships, 'though wee appointed a Coach purposelie to bring them to Chatham'.⁷⁷ It was arguable, too, that the Navy ran the risk of becoming unhealthily dependent upon external advice. In 1637 one writer asserted that the Principal Officers were so unskilled that they deputed virtually all matters to the Thames shipwrights or Trinity House, 'which are performed very slightly by those men, being only called now and then upon occation, and not otherwise att all concerned in the businesse'.⁷⁸ The accusation contained some truth.

In 1634 it was revealed that a panel of shipwrights and representatives of Trinity House had lied when they had submitted two favourable reports concerning the design of the *Unicorn*. On her maiden voyage in May 1634, the *Unicorn* proved so unstable and low in the water that she was recalled to dry dock. In their defence, the surveyors explained

74 P.R.O., HCA1/101/52, 8 June 1625, Navy Commissioners to Sir Henry Marten. I am grateful to Dr. Todd Gray for this reference.

75 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64882 fo.45, 19 Dec. 1624, Burrell to Coke.

76 *Phineas Pett*, pp.176-7, charter to Shipwrights, 22 April 1605.

77 P.R.O., SP16/296/47, 28 Aug. 1635, Edisbury to Nicholas.

78 Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.138, 'Abuses in the Navie Reduced under 3 Heads', anon.

that, 'rather than discourage any workman', they had unanimously agreed to gloss over the ship's faults, hoping that she 'might proove well'.⁷⁹ This appalling admission illustrates clearly the dangers of the Navy's reliance on the opinions of outsiders. It brings into question the role and competence of the Navy's own Surveyor, Kenrick Edisbury, whose job it was to inspect ships under construction.

Sir William Monson believed the Surveyorship was 'too much for any one man to perform'.⁸⁰ It could be argued that Edisbury's workload contributed to the *Unicorn* fiasco. When the ship was surveyed at Woolwich in August 1633, Edisbury may have been giving evidence in the Admiralty Court.⁸¹ However, during the second survey, which was carried out in January 1634, he was evidently present.⁸²

Monson thought that the inspection of ships 'cannot be perfectly performed by any other man that has not had any use of the mechanic part of that art'. After 1660 it proved impossible to be appointed as Surveyor for precisely this reason.⁸³ Yet none of the five early seventeenth century Surveyors, Sir John Trevor (1598-1611), Sir Richard Bingley (1611-18), Sir Thomas Aylesbury (1625-32), Kenrick Edisbury (1632-8) and William Batten (1638-42), were trained ship builders. Only the Navy Commissioner Thomas Norreys, who effectively acted as Surveyor from 1618 until his death in 1624, was a Master Shipwright. This lack of

79 P.R.O., SP16/268/47, Edisbury to Nicholas.

80 *Monson's Tracts*, III. 416.

81 P.R.O., SP16/251/74, p.85, 2 Aug. 1633, Edisbury's schedule of junk rope sold; *T.H.D.T.*, no.421, p.123, 2 Aug. 1633, Trinity House to Principal Officers.

82 P.R.O., SP16/258/30, 8 Jan. 1634, Edisbury to Nicholas. Edisbury states his intention to go to Woolwich tomorrow to measure the ship. Trinity House's own report on this subject is dated 24 January. See *T.H.D.T.*, no.438, pp.129-130.

83 Collinge, *Navy Board Officials*, p.5.

technical expertise meant that, before the Restoration, the Surveyor was at the mercy of specialists. The *Unicorn* fiasco raises the possibility that Edisbury was the victim of his own dependency.

Edisbury was nevertheless the most able and energetic of the Principal Officers. His mind was always brimming over with new ideas about how to raise standards, and although his knowledge of ship building may have been limited, he twice suggested ways of improving the manner in which ships were surveyed during construction. First, he recommended that they should be inspected before their decks were laid rather than after, as was usual, for then it might be possible to 'prevent som ill quallitie in the laying of the orloppe, cutting out the ports & in the fynishing of som speciall p[ar]ts of the ships'.⁸⁴ Later, Edisbury proposed that the Master Gunner of England should be consulted in future to avoid one of the most serious design faults in many of the Navy's ships, the laying of the lower tier of guns too close to the water line.⁸⁵ Neither of these sensible suggestions was apparently adopted, but the fact that Edisbury offered them up for consideration is evidence that he endeavoured to compensate for his lack of specialist training.

III. Reform

Professor Aylmer has rightly remarked that 'one of the tests by which any regime may be fairly judged is its ability to reform itself'. He has concluded that such reforms as were introduced in the Navy had 'little effect' on 'basic mal-administration'.⁸⁶ There is undoubtedly some truth in this. For instance, the Navy manifestly failed to eliminate the

84 P.R.O., SP16/242/74, 15 July 1633, Edisbury to Nicholas.

85 P.R.O., SP16/248/22, 19 Oct. 1633, Edisbury to Nicholas.

86 Aylmer, 'Attempts at Administrative Reform', p.229.

abuses surrounding the traditional right of shipwrights to take wood chips.⁸⁷ The most forceful evidence that can be adduced in favour of Aylmer's argument, however, concerns the restoration of the Principal Officers in 1628. This was meant to improve the quality of naval administration, but unintentionally it made things much worse.

The reappointment of the Principal Officers was followed by a serious decline in administrative standards. The most experienced member of the new Navy Board was the Comptroller, Sir Guilford Slingsby, who had served with Mansell between 1611 and 1618. However, he was a vicious character, whose previous service cast doubt on his commitment and probity.⁸⁸ Among Slingsby's colleagues, only the former Navy Commissioner Denis Fleming had served on the Navy Board before. The Surveyor, Sir Thomas Aylesbury, was largely inexperienced, although he had been the Admiralty Secretary between 1619 and 1624 and a Special Navy Commissioner in 1626-7. Sir Sackville Crowe had held the Treasurer-ship since April 1627, but his position may have been weak because he had not also been added to the Navy Commission. Shortly after these four men took up their new posts, Nicholas remarked that 'The remisnes & ignorance of the officers of the Navy have bene principall hinderances that the fleete & provisions here preparing are not sooner reddey'.⁸⁹

The restored Navy Board's lax attitude was clearly to be seen in its management of Chatham yard. Shortly before Assistant Commissioner

85 P.R.O., SP16/248/22, 19 Oct. 1633, Edisbury to Nicholas.

86 Aylmer 'Attempts at Administrative Reform', p. 229.

87 See below, pp.119-21.

88 For Slingsby's violence against the Deptford Storekeeper & the Navy Office housekeeper, see P.R.O., SP16/133/37, SP16/138/13, SP16/152/51. In 1624 he threatened to kill Coke if he was not added to the Navy Commission: C.S.P.D. 1623-5, pp.180-1.

89 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64897 fo.9, 2 July 1628, Nicholas to Coke.

Downing vacated the yard in February 1628 he warned that his authority had vanished with the dissolution of the Navy Commission, and that consequently there was no-one left 'to give any order'.⁹⁰ This should have prompted the Navy Board to detail one of their number to take up residence at Chatham. Unfortunately the Comptroller did not move in until June 1629.⁹¹ By the end of May 1629 chaos reigned in the yard. Lodgings which had hitherto been provided solely for the use of workmen were now inhabited by their families as well. This created a demand for firewood which was so voracious that the cabin partitions in the recently repaired *Convertive* were ripped out.⁹²

Slingsby's transfer to Chatham did not put an end to the poor quality of administration. In March 1631 the Navy Board was heavily criticised by Coke. The Principal Officers had done nothing to repair damaged fencing surrounding the timber yards, nor had they renewed the locks broken off the gates. Stores were issued without proper authorisation, and no proper account was taken of remains. Ships were allowed to remain so long in dry dock that their bilges rotted.⁹³ However, not all of Coke's complaints were fair. He accused the Officers of appointing shipkeepers who were so inadequate that 'the whole guard of the Navie at Chatham is not sufficient to man out a boate', even though in April 1630 they had discharged twenty of the most unserviceable shipkeepers.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the deficiencies revealed by Coke's letter are staggering.

90 P.R.O., SP16/94/31, 23 Feb. 1628, Downing to Crowe.

91 P.R.O., SP16/143/39, Slingsby to Admiralty, received 31 May 1629. The Admiralty was initially suspicious of the need to despatch Slingsby to Chatham, & ordered him 'not to remove' (P.R.O., SP16/156 fo.21). Slingsby's letter was a reply to this order. The Admiralty's involvement will not explain why the Navy Board did not act sooner.

92 P.R.O., SP16/143/37, 30 May 1629, Edisbury to Admiralty.

93 Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2541, fos.174-80.

94 P.R.O., SP16/164/38, 10 April 1630, Principal Officers to Nicholas.

One reason why the Navy Board proved so inept was because it was wracked by internal strife. Most of the trouble was caused by Aylesbury. He assumed that his baronetcy entitled him to claim seniority over Slingsby, who was a knight bachelor, and over Russell, whose own baronetcy post-dated his.⁹⁵ The intensity of the animosities aroused may be gauged by the fact that, shortly after Slingsby's death, his widow feared that she would receive 'no freindly office' if she submitted a petition to Aylesbury in his capacity as Master of Requests.⁹⁶ The administrative consequences of all this quarrelling were serious. By these 'continual contestations', remarked Coke, 'the Officers lett faule their authoritie & reputation'. They met scarcely once a quarter, while getting their signatures took two weeks.⁹⁷ The only Officer who may have been trusted by the Admiralty before Russell's appointment to the Navy Board in January 1630 was its least important member, Denis Fleming.⁹⁸

It was evident that something would have to be done to remedy the shortcomings of the Navy Board. In Aylmer's eyes, the Navy lacked the capacity to reform itself. On the face of it this was correct, for although in 1628 Kenrick Edisbury had been elevated in the administration to compensate for the inadequacies of the Navy Board, the abuses of the Officers nevertheless went unchecked.⁹⁹ Moreover, from January 1630 Edisbury reverted to his previous role as Paymaster of the Navy, thereby depriving the Admiralty of even his limited help. However, Aylmer has

95 P.R.O., SP16/183/2, SP16/184/25, SP16/185/63; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9311 fo.9v.

96 P.R.O., SP16/210/89, Jan. 1632, Margaret Slingsby to Dorchester.

97 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64901 fo.78r-v, 30 Oct. 1630, Coke's 'Account for Sea Services', submitted to the King.

98 P.R.O., SP14/215, p.81, 10 Feb. 1630, Nicholas to Fleming. The wording in this letter is suggestive: 'I make bold to write to you because I know yor care and eye upon his majestties service canne best satifie me'.

99 See above, pp.76-7.

overlooked an important, and largely successful, reform campaign which was begun in February 1630.

On 8 February Sir John Coke and Sir William Russell met the former Navy Commissioner William Burrell. They agreed to approach Lord Treasurer Portland for help in obtaining a letter from the King authorising Burrell to sit with the Principal Officers.¹⁰⁰ Coke's choice of Burrell contrasts with his former hounding of the man for his irregular proceedings as a Navy Commissioner. Perhaps Coke believed that poachers make the best gamekeepers. Perhaps, too, he thought that Burrell was unlikely to allow himself to be overawed by his colleagues. Not only had Burrell been one of the most industrious and able of the Navy Commissioners, he had also angered many of his colleagues by his autocratic behaviour.¹⁰¹ Coke's plan to add such a strong, forceful personality to the Navy Board was shrewd, and the King readily agreed.

For Coke, this first step towards reform was seemingly soured by Charles' insistence that Phineas Pett should also be appointed as an Assistant Principal Officer. Pett had been deeply associated with the regime led by Sir Robert Mansell. Coke may have tried to resist Pett's inclusion, for in his autobiography Pett refers to 'some strong opposition' to his appointment 'which could not prevail'. Coke's plans for reforming the Navy Board were nearly wrecked altogether in August, when Burrell died before his patent had even passed the Great Seal.¹⁰² Coke now had to act quickly, for unless he did someone else as unacceptable as Pett, perhaps the dreaded Mansell, might step into the breach. He therefore turned to his friend Sir Kenelm Digby, who had commanded a

100 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64900 fo.73.

101 P.R.O., SP16/45 fo.15, Roger Parr's examination by the Special Navy Commissioners.

102 *Phineas Pett*, pp.143-5.

successful privateering expedition in 1628. Coke acted so fast in securing the vacant position for Digby that the first the latter knew of the appointment was on being handed his patent by Coke's servant.¹⁰³

By October 1630, then, Coke had an agent in the Officers' camp. However, this in itself did not constitute reform. The real job of putting things straight was to be undertaken by Coke himself. That month he handed the King a report on the Navy. Charles had requested that this should be concerned with the captains who had served at sea that year, but Coke also included strong criticisms of the Navy Board.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps Coke suspected that Charles had already started to think of reforming the Navy, for he cannot have been unaware of the rumour that the Earl of Holland would soon be appointed Lord Admiral.¹⁰⁵ Whatever the truth of the matter, Coke was evidently soon given a free hand by his fellow Admiralty Commissioners to reform the Navy Board.

Coke drafted his articles of reform in March 1631.¹⁰⁶ These almost certainly formed the basis of a set of missing Admiralty Instructions issued in mid-April which ordered the Principal Officers to 'reforme and rectifie their proceedings'.¹⁰⁷ Strong evidence that Coke's draft was indeed transformed into these instructions is furnished by a letter written by the Principal Officers in July 1631, which clearly echoes Coke's articles. This same letter also suggests that Coke's efforts were

103 Young, *Servility and Service*, p.208; H.M.C., *MSS. in Various Collections*, vii. 398.

104 P.R.O., SP16/174/21, 10 Oct. 1630, Coke to Nicholas; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64901 fos.71-9, 30 Oct. 1630, Coke's report.

105 See above, pp. 35-6.

106 See above, n.93.

107 P.R.O., SP16/156 (contents list to missing Admiralty out-letter book) fo.67v, n.d. The only known extant copy of the Instructions was owned until 1974 by the Royal Institute of Naval Architects (Scott MS., vol. 800). It was sold to the now liquidated book-dealers, Francis Edwards Ltd. Its present whereabouts is unknown.

far from wasted, for it was addressed to Deptford's Storekeeper and Clerk of the Cheque and required them to institute measures for reforming the yard.¹⁰⁸ The general efficacy of the reform campaign may perhaps best be judged by the fact that, when the King visited Chatham yard in June 1631, he was so pleased with what he saw that he banished all thoughts of immediately appointing a new Lord Admiral.

The reform process was assisted by the replacement of three of the Principal Officers. In June 1629 Crowe was suspended for allegedly misappropriating funds. Although his suspension was lifted less than a month later, his departure so soon afterwards suggests that he was pressured to go.¹⁰⁹ Slingsby expired, with impeccable timing, in April 1631 and was replaced by Sir Henry Palmer.¹¹⁰ At about the same time, Aylesbury decided to turn over most of his business to his senior clerk, Nathaniel Tearne, having failed to achieve Admiralty recognition of his alleged precedence.¹¹¹ However, the tenacity with which he clung to office until he was bought off by the King in October 1632 was damaging, for as Digby remarked, 'the whole business of the navy languisheth much for want of a surveyour'.¹¹² In Kenrick Edisbury, though, the Navy

108 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C87/16), 25 July 1631, Principal Officers to John Wells and Edward Falkener.

109 See above, p.76. A letter by the Lord Treasurer to the Attorney-General in Jan. 1630 ordering the cancellation of Crowe's patent offers no clues: P.R.O., SP16/158/44.

110 The precise time of Slingsby's death is unknown, but Palmer was empowered to take up provisions as Comptroller on 30 April: P.R.O., C231/5 p.54. I am grateful to Lynn Hulse for this reference.

111 The Admiralty may have deliberately brought the dispute to a head in April: P.R.O., SP16/188/76, Admiralty agenda, 16 April 1631. Aylesbury nevertheless expected Tearne to report to him: Bodl. Libr., MS. Clarendon 5 fo.30, Wells to Aylesbury.

112 P.R.O., SP16/223/21, 12 Sept. 1632, Digby to Coke; B.R.L., Coventry MS., Grants & Patents, DV892/124, 20 Oct. 1632, Aylesbury's patent for a monopoly on money-weights. The Navy often used junk to make lashing lines & netting ropes: Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649A fos.151v,159v; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649B fo.89.

possessed a Surveyor who, unlike his predecessor, did not love contestations, but rather 'studyeth continually how to continue and mould thinges for the kinges best advantage'.

The elevation of Edisbury to the Navy Board seemingly marked the end of the process of reform begun by Coke in 1630. However, within months of his promotion, Edisbury discovered that Palmer, Pett and Fleming, plus a number of other dockyard officials, had sold junk rope without proper authorisation.¹¹³ Known as the 'Brown Paper' affair, because junk rope was used in the manufacture of brown paper, the episode has customarily been regarded as demonstrative of the rottenness of Caroline naval administration. Indeed, Professor Aylmer has described it not only as a 'major scandal', but one which precipitated disputes for years afterwards, and he has advanced a seemingly impressive array of references to support this latter contention.¹¹⁴ Yet the documents he cites do not bear out his case. Seven refer simply to the original Brown Paper scandal. Another ten concern a feud which had actually flared up in 1630, involving Deptford's Storekeeper, John Wells, and the yard's Clerk of the Cheque, Edward Falkener. The remaining references deal with the misconduct of Portsmouth's Clerk of the Cheque and its Storekeeper Portsmouth's Clerk of the Cheque and its Storekeeper, John and Francis Brooke, and with the succession to Falkener after his death.

Professor Young believes that the most reprehensible aspect of the Brown Paper scandal was the King's failure to discipline the culprits. A similar view was expressed at the time by Edisbury:

I feare the Close of buzines latelie examyned in the Admiraltie will anymatt som to doe worse here after then they have don, for notwithstanding that Mr Secretary Windebanke hath delivered his

113 *Phineas Pett*, p.153.

114 Aylmer, 'Attempts at Administrative Reform', p.237.

Maljesltfiels pleasure that all the delinquents are to prepare their answers in wrytinge against his Maljesltfiels returne (as is said) yet the generall vote amongst them is that there wilbe no further mencon of the matter.¹¹⁵

However, Edisbury's fears, although understandable, were misplaced.

Phineas Pett was forced to repay £86 he had received from the sale of junk,¹¹⁶ and future sales of junk and decayed stores were closely regulated by the Admiralty.¹¹⁷ Moreover, none of those implicated in 1633-4 were ever caught with their fingers in the till again. The problem with the assertion that royal leniency proved counter-productive is that there is no evidence to suggest that it did.

The most significant feature of the theft uncovered in 1633 was its triviality. The sums involved amounted to only around £600 over a period of three or four years. Those who admitted to the unauthorised sale of junk rope may have understated their receipts, of course.¹¹⁸ However, it is suggestive that, in 1630 at least, substantial quantities of junk were sold in a legitimate fashion.¹¹⁹ The money realised from these sales was used as a source of petty cash rather than to line pockets. For example, in January 1630 Aylesbury and Fleming ordered the sale of £20 worth of junk ends to provide funds to repair the roofs of storm-damaged buildings at Chatham.¹²⁰ Viewed in purely financial terms, the

115 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64908 fo.7, 10 Mar. 1634, Edisbury to Coke.

116 *Phineas Pett*, p.156; P.R.O., SP16/251/74, p.89.

117 P.R.O., SP16/254/15, 20 Dec. 1633, Edisbury to Nicholas, asking him for an Admiralty warrant to sell decayed stores; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fos.296-301, 21 Aug. 1638, account of decayed stores sold by the Lord Admiral's warrant; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9299 fo.64, account of junk made into rope at Chatham, Christmas Quarter, 1639.

118 P.R.O., SP16/251/76, précis of findings in the High Court of Admiralty, Nov. 1633. The Portsmouth Storekeeper, Francis Brooke, only admitted to having pocketed £13 6s 8d in 7 years, while the Deptford Storekeeper, John Wells, simply failed to specify how much junk he had sold.

119 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649B, fo.3v.

120 P.R.O., SP16/158/27, 8 Jan. 1630. A dorsal note shows that this warrant was used as evidence in 1633-4.

Brown Paper scandal pales by comparison with the frauds unmasked twenty-five years earlier by the Earl of Northampton.

The depositions obtained in 1633-4 reveal that the Navy Board mistakenly thought it had the right to authorise the sale of junk without reference to the Admiralty. This may have been a result of ignorance, rather than a conscious attempt to subvert good government. Nathaniel Tearne's testimony lends credence to this view, while also implicitly accusing Edisbury of hypocrisy. In December 1628 Aylesbury and Fleming had ordered the sale of refuse rope ends to the value of thirty or forty pounds. Aylesbury had been unsure whether the Officers had the power to authorise the sale of junk without Admiralty approval, and so

he went...to acquainte their l[ordshi]ps therw[ith], but meeting w[ith] Mr Edisbury & Mr Wells attending there he desired their opinions therin (as ancient servitors in the navy) who tould him that for so small a matter & so good a use they thought it might safely be sould w[ith]out troubling their l[ordshi]ps, uppon w[hi]ch he wrote down to lett it pass.¹²¹

If Tearne was not telling the truth one might reasonably have expected Edisbury to have said so, but there is no record that he did.

The Brown Paper scandal neither demonstrated the essential rottenness of Caroline naval administration in the mid-1630s, nor did it reflect seriously on the Admiralty's reform campaign of 1631. Nevertheless, the Navy Board was still far from perfect. Writing in the 1660s, one commentator contrasted the industry of Edisbury with the indolence of Palmer, who he said often retired to his country house 'takeing his pleasure'.¹²² The frequency with which Palmer absented himself may have been exaggerated, but since he was paid on the assumption that he was in

121 P.R.O., SP16/269/61, 10 June 1634.

122 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9311 fo.9v, 'Reasons moveing why itt will be better and safer to have the Navy Office Governed by Commissioners then by Princip[all] Officers' (1662?, copy, anon.).

regular attendance, he should always have been busy if he was doing his job properly.¹²³

Idleness may have contributed to the delay in preparing the Channel squadron for sea in 1634. Twelve days after the Navy Board was ordered to fit out four ships, they were criticised for their 'supine negligence' in failing to hurry along the preparations.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, the Admiralty's rebuke spurred the Officers into action. Two ships continued to be delayed because they needed new masts, but three weeks later the remaining ships were on their way to Tilbury Hope to complete their manning. These would have left Chatham 'much sooner, but for the contrary windes that hindered their victualls'.¹²⁵

A much more important set of questions than those raised in 1633-4 was raised in November 1636 by the Earl of Northumberland. The thirteen articles of complaint which he submitted to the King not only touched on the Navy Board but also the Admiralty. Aylmer has described them as 'the most formidable indictment of the naval administration, apart from Monson's embittered fulminations, since the commissioners' report of 1618'. He has also argued that the reception they received was far from satisfactory. Although new instructions were laid down for the Paymaster, 'the case against the other officers was dealt with less constructively'. Furthermore, he alleges that Northumberland grew

123 Palmer was absent at the Kent assizes in July 1634 (P.R.O., SP16/271/51) & at home in Aug. 1638 (*Phineas Pett*, p.170). This latter absence may have been due to illness. See above, p.81.

124 P.R.O., SP16/228 fos.121,129, 1 & 12 March 1634, Admiralty to Principal Officers. The rebuke was not entirely fair. Accusing the Officers of slowness in rigging the *Unicorn*, they overlooked the fact that she was new & had not yet received her masts. Yet Edisbury had forewarned them on 24 Feb.: SP16/260/100.

125 P.R.O., SP16/262/82, 15 March 1634, Edisbury to Nicholas; SP16/263/72, 31 March 1634, Edisbury to Nicholas; SP16/265/10, 3 April 1634, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

disillusioned after his attempt to achieve reform. In the Earl's later capacity as Lord High Admiral 'there is little to show that Northumberland succeeded in stamping out the long-standing abuses which he and his earlier critics had remarked'.¹²⁶ Aylmer therefore continues to suggest that the Navy was incapable of reforming itself.

Northumberland's enquiry undoubtedly highlighted some serious shortcomings. The serious incidence of leakiness among the ships of the 1636 fleet, which formed the subject matter of article three, suggested dockyard negligence. The Navy Board was roundly attacked for this, however, and although the following year a pinnace was lost at sea in fine weather, matters were never as bad again.¹²⁷

Many of Northumberland's articles implicitly blamed the Navy's administrators for faults which they alone were powerless to prevent. Article one drew attention to the great age of many of the Navy's ships, which were so decrepit 'that the repair of them is a great and continual charge, and the ships are able to do little service'. This was undoubtedly true, but the Navy Board had been saying precisely this since 1633.¹²⁸ The King might have remedied this by spending his money more wisely. Instead, in the mid-1630s he chose to squander precious financial resources on the construction of a single ship, the *Sovereign of the Seas*.¹²⁹

Article twelve also dealt with a grievance which neither the Admiralty nor the Navy Board could do much to remedy. This concerned the debts due to the Chatham Chest, the fund established in 1590 by Sir John Hawkins

126 Aylmer, 'Attempts at Administrative Reform', pp.237-9. For the articles, see P.R.O., SP16/338/39. 127 See below, pp.343-4.
128 P.R.O., SP16/245/38, 31 Aug. 1633, Principal Officers to Admiralty.
129 On the *Sovereign*, see below, pp.178-9.

for the benefit of injured seamen. It was true that one of the debtors was the Navy Treasurer himself. In 1626 there were a series of mutinies because the Navy's seamen had not been paid, and as a result Russell's Paymaster had been forced to raid the Chest. The figure involved amounted to over £2,370, but Russell had paid back all but £500 by 1636. This last sum he had withheld, for he said he had been told by the Clerk of the Chest that provided 'they might have it as they had occasion to use it for the payment of their pensioners, it was well enough...And as he called for the same he had it'. The main debtor to the Chest, and the real cause of its financial difficulties, was the former Navy Treasurer, Sir Sackville Crowe. Crowe had used the excuse of a technicality to refuse to pay money from the fund. This was that the tickets issued to injured seamen in 1627 and 1628 had been misdated 1625 and 1626. The most promising way to recover the money seemed to be through the courts, and as a result Crowe was prosecuted by the Governors of the Chest in Chancery in the early 1630s. This led Crowe to agree to pay the £3,005 which he owed in three instalments. However, not only did he proceed to default, but after April 1634 he shielded himself from arrest by claiming the protection afforded by his letters patent as ambassador to Constantinople.¹³⁰ The only way Crowe could have been brought to book thereafter was by depriving him of his ambassadorial status, but only the King could do this.

Northumberland automatically equated deficiencies with administrative

130 P.R.O., SP16/349/98, 13 March 1637, (Russell's defence); SP16/147/10, 17 July 1629, distressed mariners to Admiralty; SP16/301/44, [9 Nov.] 1635, Nathaniel Tearne & Miles Troughton to Admiralty. For a useful discussion of these documents, see Powell, 'The Chatham Chest', pp.176-80.

malpractice. However, in the case of the fleet's rotten cordage (article four), the explanation lay in the difficulties posed by a limited supply seven years earlier.¹³¹ Article nine criticised the conduct of the Paymaster, John Hollond, who had refused to pay seamen turned over from one ship to another for the time served in their first ship. However, Hollond's behaviour stemmed from a procedural flaw rather than misconduct. In order to receive their pay, seamen were obliged to produce a purser's ticket as proof of service. But tickets were only issued when a ship was decommissioned. Men who were turned over from one ship to another were therefore not given tickets until they were discharged. Usually, it was possible to check the ship's muster book to verify the claims of seamen who had been turned over without a ticket. Unfortunately, in 1636 many of the seamen who had been turned over from the *St. Andrew* were unable to obtain their pay because the ship remained at sea. Northumberland claimed that this was an abuse, but it would have been irresponsible to have paid seamen without access to the ship's muster books. The obvious solution, and the one actually adopted, was to issue seamen with two sets of tickets, one by the purser when they were turned over, and another when they were finally discharged. Ironically, this suggestion was made by the Treasurer and Paymaster. Northumberland was never the sole champion of reform.¹³²

This claim has nevertheless been implicitly advanced by Professor Young, who alleges that Sir John Coke had become an impediment to reform by 1636.¹³³ This was ironic if it was true, for Coke had spearheaded

131 See below, pp.357-9.

132 P.R.O., SP16/349/98; SP16/350/7, 16 March 1637 (the King's judgement).

133 Young, *Servility and Service*, p.213.

previous reform campaigns himself. Coke certainly had considerable reason to dislike Northumberland, whether his criticisms were valid or not. He may have suspected that Northumberland's attack, like the Earl of Northampton's criticism of the Navy Board thirty years earlier, served simply to cloak his own ambitions for the Admiralty. Such ambitions were likely to alarm Coke, who was understandably possessive of the Navy, which he had helped to mould and administer almost continuously since 1618. Moreover, Northumberland's desire to obtain Coke's office as Secretary of State for his brother-in-law, the Earl of Leicester, was hardly guaranteed to please Coke.

Coke's opposition to Northumberland may have been partly motivated by jealousy and pride, but it would be rash to assume that Coke therefore lost sight of the Navy's interests. At the Council table in November, in the King's presence, he unsuccessfully opposed the Earl's proposal to award a pay rise to the captains who had served that year. Coke's attitude was not unreasonable, for although Northumberland could claim that he was anxious to reward good service, Coke, who was forever concerned with minimising costs, would have appreciated the dangers of setting a precedent.¹³⁴ Later the same month Coke and Northumberland again crossed swords. The Earl once more emerged victorious, yet it was he who was clearly at fault. The details of the case are that, in May 1636, Northumberland had appointed Henry Ibbotson as purser of the *St. Andrew* after the death of Henry Holt the younger. In Ibbotson's place, as purser of the *Mary Rose*, the Earl appointed Holt's brother, William. Before his death, however, Henry Holt had nominated William Finney as

134 H.M.C., *De L'Isle MSS.*, vl. 66. The award of a month's bonus was made on 21 March 1637: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.290.

his deputy. Finney acted as the ship's purser until 29 October, when he was displaced by Ibbotson. Shortly after, however, Coke and the Navy Board ousted Ibbotson. Northumberland duly complained at this apparent affront, and although Coke had the full backing of Edward Nicholas, who set out the case against the Earl, Ibbotson was evidently reinstated.

The evidence against Northumberland ought to have been sufficient to have earned him a mild rebuke from the King. The only officer who had the right to instal warrant officers on a permanent basis was the Lord High Admiral, whose office was executed by the Admiralty Commissioners. Northumberland's commission as admiral of the fleet allowed him to make temporary appointments where vacancies occurred, but the Admiralty was perfectly entitled to displace any officer he appointed on the fleet's return. By the same token, Ibbotson was not entitled to take up the pursership of the *St. Andrew* after the Earl's commission had expired. Yet this is what he did, for Northumberland's commission ended when his flagship arrived at Erith on 17 October. Nor had Northumberland acted within his authority when he appointed William Holt to the *Mary Rose*, for the ship formed no part of his fleet.¹³⁵ In the ensuing dispute Northumberland failed to see, or refused to admit, his error. Apparently he did not mind accusing others of administrative irregularity, but he liked it less when a similar charge was laid at his own door.

It would be absurd to suggest that, in the wider struggle between Northumberland and Coke over the former's articles, the Earl was the villain of the piece. Many of Northumberland's criticisms were

135 P.R.O., SP16/336/60, 28 Nov. 1636, Nicholas to Admiralty. The newsletter writer Edmund Rossingham echoed the official line when he said that Northumberland had done 'nothing but what his commission ...warranted him to do': *Court and Times*, II. 256-7.

misguided, yet the Earl seems to have been genuinely convinced of the need for reform. However, it is clear that the evidence will not bear out the argument that Coke fought his corner without reference to the rights and wrongs of the case at issue. In the Ibbotson affair at least, the King's decision to side with the Earl may simply have been an attempt to save Northumberland from embarrassment.

Aylmer argues that Northumberland grew disillusioned with his failure to achieve significant reforms. The evidence he cites for this is in a letter to Wentworth, in which Northumberland complained that 'this proceeding hath brought me to a Resolution not to trouble myselfe any more with endeavouring a Reformation unlesse I be Commanded to it'.¹³⁶ However, Aylmer has overlooked the date of this letter. It was written five weeks before the King sat in judgment. At that time Northumberland's despondency seems understandable; his complaints had been submitted and nothing had been done. There is no reason to assume that he remained so disheartened, especially as he was appointed Lord High Admiral in March 1638. Indeed, Northumberland's subsequent appointment suggests that the King accepted the validity of much of his criticism.

Northumberland may have been more of a reformer as Lord High Admiral than has been supposed. The daily running of the Navy while he was in office is largely obscure, because most of his papers have disappeared. However, a memorandum compiled in 1639 suggests that he continued to be interested in improving standards. For example, he expressed concern that remains of victuals were calculated on the false assumption that ships were always fully crewed. Similarly, he was alarmed at the number

136 *Strafforde's Letters*, ii. 49, 7 Feb. 1637, Northumberland to Wentworth.

of mariners who fled the press and served in foreign navies.¹³⁷ Two years later his fears about manning were translated into action when he secured legislation designed to improve the system of impressment.¹³⁸ In November 1640 the Earl issued a set of Admiralty instructions. These contained little that was new, but they did serve to clarify the duties of individual officers. Significantly, the preamble was couched in the language of reform.¹³⁹ Lastly, in May 1641 Northumberland issued instructions which regulated the sale of clothing to the Navy's seamen.¹⁴⁰ The Earl had previously dealt with this subject in his enquiry of 1636-7, in which he had rightly expressed concern at the level of fees charged by the vendors. Clearly, Northumberland did not lose interest in the question of reform after 1638.

IV. Storekeeping

In 1634 the outgoing Venetian Ambassador unwittingly paid tribute to the Navy's ability to reform itself. In a paper which was probably intended for his successor, he described the state of Chatham yard.

Everything is admirably organised, so that all the requisite apparatus is always in readiness, carefully guarded and deposited...divided into several compartments, each one containing everything necessary for arming a ship. The arms or device of the name of each ship is placed on the door of these apartments, and thus distinguishes what belongs to them.¹⁴¹

Three years earlier matters had been very different, Coke had complained

137 Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.128. Wrongly dated 1637 on fo.129. The memo. mentions money issued in 1638.

138 See below, p.239.

139 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A193 fos. 82-103v, 14 Nov. 1640. The preamble claimed that the instructions were intended to correct 'sundry misdemeanours and abuses whilch by connyvance, neglect & length of tyme have crept into his Majestties royall Navy'.

140 P.R.O., SP16/480/36, 13 May, Northumberland to Pennington.

141 C.S.P.V., 1632-6, p.365.

that furniture and rigging lay 'confusedly in heapes...w[hilch] cannot but be an occasion of losse of the stores and a great distraccon and preiudice to his Maj[est]t[ies] service'. In April 1631, however, as part of their general reform campaign, the Admiralty had ordered the Principal Officers to fit

Roomes...in his Maj[est]t[ies] Storehowse at Chatham for the laying upp of all the rigging and furniture of ev[er]y of his Maj[est]t[ies] shippes and pynnaces there apar[te] by themselves, w[ith] the name of the shippe in the Entraunce into ev[er]y such roome, that the furniture and stores belonging to them may be readily found upon all occasions.¹⁴²

This injunction did not end storeroom untidiness. As late as March 1633 Edisbury found that many of the sails were 'unsorted to their propre ships & misnamed'. The reason for this was that 'the multiplicitie of buzines layd on the storekeeper]...at some tymes of buzines is more the[n] 3 men can well doe'.¹⁴³ From 1635 the Navy Board allowed an annual fee of £20 to be paid to one Charles Grant to assist the storekeeper.¹⁴⁴ This attracted criticism from one writer, who thought Grant did nothing 'but what is the Storeke[ep]e[r]s duty'.¹⁴⁵ However, Grant's salary was a small price to pay if it meant that the stores were never again in a shambles.

Ironically, the partitioning of the old storehouse at Chatham created as many problems as it solved. The Navy Board pointed out that, now that

142 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo. 158, 27 April 1631.

143 P.R.O., SP16/233/58, 10 March 1633, Edisbury to Digby.

144 Grant's allowance is first mentioned on the 1635 account: P.R.O., E351/2274, n.f. The Storekeeper, William Lawrence, had probably been overloaded since 1619, when the keepership of nails & sails had been added to that of the 'instores': P.R.O., SP16/267/45, 5 May 1634, deposition by Lawrence. The Navy Board unsuccessfully petitioned in Jan. 1636 for the addition of a separate storekeeper to look after the sails & ironwork: P.R.O., SP16/344/106.

145 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A192, p.7. The writer was probably the Paymaster, John Hollond.

rigging and sails were under one roof, a fire in the storehouse would prove disastrous. They recommended instead that these stores should be stowed aboard ship.¹⁴⁶ Fearing that this would simply encourage theft, however, the Admiralty were only prepared to sanction the removal of the storehouse to a remote part of the yard where it was less likely to be set alight if a fire broke out elsewhere.¹⁴⁷ Those who concurred on the need for reform were not bound to agree about the course it should take.

The responsibility for auditing storekeepers' accounts was supposed to rest with the Comptroller. However, by the 1630s the Comptroller had neither the clerks, nor perhaps the inclination, to discharge this function.¹⁴⁸ Instead, this task evidently fell to the Surveyor, Kenrick Edisbury, who kept a clerk for this purpose.¹⁴⁹ Lower down the administration, the crucial officer in the management of the stores was the Clerk of the Cheque. There was a Clerk at each yard, who normally kept counterbooks of both issues and receipts with the Storekeeper to prevent him from falsifying records to his own advantage. However, at Deptford, the Clerk, Edward Falkener, was prevented from keeping counterbooks until at least 1631 by the Storekeeper, John Wells. Wells claimed that none of Deptford's Clerks had kept counterbooks in the last thirty years, though he ignored the possibility that this said more

146 P.R.O., SP16/277/85, 24 Nov. 1634. The Officers instead wanted to use the storehouse as a place to stow new cables.

147 P.R.O., SP16/264 fos.56v-7, 13 Dec. 1634, Admiralty to Principal Officers.

148 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9311 fo.9v (Palmer's alleged indolence). In 1639 the Woolwich Storekeeper advocated the appointment of an auditor of the store: Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285), fo.284. On the Comptroller's lack of clerks, see *Holland's Discourses*, pp.337-8 (Robert Slingsby's tract).

149 P.R.O., SP16/268/65. Edisbury kept 4 clerks, although he subsided them heavily out of his own pocket. One of Edisbury's clerks also examined the Victualler's accounts, a job which in the past had fallen to the Comptroller: N.M.M., REC/1/62.

about their indolence than his right to conduct his business unchecked.¹⁵⁰ It is symptomatic of the Admiralty Commissioners' basic good sense that they were not prepared to countenance such nonsense. In their reforming instructions issued in 1631 they reiterated the Clerk's role as the Storekeeper's comptroller.¹⁵¹

Wells' refusal to accept the principle of controlment begs the question what he was trying to hide. It may be that he was simply unprepared to concede anything to a man he regarded as his enemy.¹⁵² On the other hand, he may not have wanted the Clerk to pry into his affairs for other reasons. Until his death in 1636, Wells' fee was heavily in arrears.¹⁵³ How he managed to support a wife and family is unclear, but Oppenheim probably hit the nail on the head. 'Unless he was more honest than his fellows', he observed, 'the crown, if it did not pay him directly, had to do so indirectly'.¹⁵⁴ If Wells was fiddling the books he would not have wanted Falkener to check them, especially since the Clerk was likely to be more assiduous than most.

Falkener's recovery of the right to keep counterbooks was an important

150 P.R.O., SP16/183/38, 29 Jan. 1631, Falkener's petition; SP16/185/87, Feb. 1631, Wells' answer. The former Navy Treasurer, Roger Langford, confirmed that in the 1580s & 1590s the Clerk had kept counterbooks with the Storekeeper: P.R.O., SP16/174/106-8, SP16/277/28.

151 Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2541 fos. 175v-176; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C87/16), 25 July 1631, orders to be observed by the Storekeeper & Clerk.

152 Their enmity went back to 1615, when Wells had procured a grant of the keepership of a type of stores known as the outstores, which had previously been managed by the Clerk. For the quarrel this created, see above, n.150. For Wells' grant, see P.R.O., C66/2024/10.

153 P.R.O., SP16/43/47, n.d., Wells to Buckingham; SP16/53/90, 12 Feb. 1627, Wells to Nicholas; Hampshire Record Office, Shelley-Rolls MS. 18M51/636/57, n.d., Wells to Charles I, with reply of 16 Jan. 1630).

154 Oppenheim, *Administration of the Royal Navy*, p.230. Wells was one of those accused in 1633 of wrongly selling junk rope. He admitted selling junk on Navy Board warrants to raise petty cash, but he said he never pocketed any of the proceeds: P.R.O., SP16/268/82.

victory for sound management. It was accompanied by a less satisfying triumph, however, when the Clerk also snatched from the Storekeeper the right to make out bills to suppliers. The Storekeeper was ultimately accountable if the Clerk, either through accident or design, accredited him with receipts for more than the goods actually delivered. Given the enmity that existed between Falkener and Wells, this arrangement was a recipe for trouble. In 1634 Wells protested that Falkener had made out 164 erroneous bills over the last two-and-a-half years. These included one bill for 50,000 nails instead of the 15,000 which Wells alleged he had received.¹⁵⁵ Wells did not specify why he thought such an error had occurred, but it seems likely that it was the result of numerical confusion. For his part, Falkener did not deny that mistakes had been made, but he disputed their scale, claiming that of the 164 supposedly faulty bills, 115 were actually correct.¹⁵⁶ The remainder he attributed to clerical error, and to Wells himself for failing to inspect the ledger at the time they were recorded.

This quarrel demonstrates that 'reform' could sometimes make things worse. However, it is to the Admiralty's credit that they sorted out the mess. They decided to allow the Clerk the right to make out and sign the bills, but they required the Storekeeper's countersignature to validate them.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, they might have gone further. They should also have insisted that future ledger entries be written in words rather than in numerals, to avoid a repetition of the mistake over the nails. It was

155 P.R.O., SP16/268/77, 30 May 1634, Wells to Admiralty; SP16/276/21-2, 23 Oct. 1634, reasons why the Storekeeper should make out bills; SP16/273/81, examples of erroneous bills, n.d.

156 P.R.O., SP16/275/47, Oct. 1634, Falkener to Admiralty; SP16/277/63, 17 Nov. 1634, Falkener to Admiralty.

157 P.R.O., SP16/277/65, 18 Nov. 1634, Admiralty order.

not until 1640, when Northumberland considered the question, that this small but important reform was introduced.¹⁵⁸

Storekeepers ordinarily issued stores on receiving a warrant signed by at least two Principal Officers.¹⁵⁹ However, it was sometimes considered expedient to lay aside the formal procedure. When in December 1626 the storekeeper John Acworth was asked whether he had been 'constreyned to deliv[er] forth out of his Majestties stores only uppon the bare want of some particular Menn' he answered that he had, 'or els the service must have suffered'.¹⁶⁰ This may sound like an attempt to explain away suspicious procedural irregularity, but a willingness to overlook administrative form in times of emergency was essential. This attitude was adopted, and stoutly defended, by the Plymouth victualler Sir James Bagg during the war years of the 1620s.¹⁶¹ Indeed, an officer who failed to waive the rules in an emergency was liable to earn himself a rebuke.

158 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A193 fo.96v, Northumberland's instructions, 14 Nov. 1640. Forty years later Deptford's Storekeeper was reprimanded for failing to enter words rather than numerals: *The Naval Miscellany* N.R.S., ccxxv (1984), ed. N.A.M. Rodger, v. 127-8.

159 Brit. Libr., Sloane MS. 3232 fo.92. For a rare example of a surviving warrant, see P.R.O., SP16/236/2, 1 April 1633, Palmer & Pett to Wells.

160 P.R.O., SP16/45 fo.18; SP16/42/61. Acworth was the Woolwich Storekeeper. The Navy Commissioners had originally wanted to abolish his job as part of their attempt to abandon Woolwich yard: *Commissions of Enquiry*, p.261. Instead, he was transferred to Deptford. The re-emergence of Woolwich as a place to build & repair ships in the 1630s meant that he was ordered to return in June 1637 (*C.S.P.D.*, 1637, p.223). He seems not to have done so, although his son William moved to the yard, probably as his proxy, in the summer of 1636, & succeeded as Storekeeper after his father's death in 1638: see N.M.M., RUSI/NM/86/4, Woolwich Ordinary, Midsummer Quarter 1636; N.M.M., MS 88/044, Woolwich yard accounts, 1636/7; P.R.O., PROB11/179/39, fo.298v, July 1638, John's will; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9299 fo.88, Woolwich yard accounts, 1640/1. During John's absence the Woolwich stores were entrusted to the yard's Clerk of the Cheque, Francis Sheldon, 'being not p[er]tinent to his place but p[er]formed by order and appoyntment of the officers': P.R.O., E351/2273, n.f.

161 See below, p.271.

In 1636 Nicholas chastised Edisbury for insisting on an Admiralty warrant before despatching some cables and anchors required by the fleet, when he knew that an outbreak of plague prevented the Admiralty Commissioners from meeting.¹⁶² However, Edisbury implicitly denied the charge, averring that he and his colleagues never refused to issue ground tackle on request, 'least unexpected accydents happen'.¹⁶³

As a general rule, however, procedural irregularities were frowned upon. In June 1635 the Principal Officers were informed that the Portsmouth Storekeeper, Francis Brooke, had issued a thousand deal boards on the strength of a warrant from the admiral of the First Ship Money Fleet, the Earl of Lindsey.¹⁶⁴ Lindsey's desire to become Lord High Admiral was well advertised that summer, but he never held the post, and the Admiralty was right to insist that Brooke be rebuked.¹⁶⁵

The Admiralty's preparedness to chastise storekeepers who broke the rules does not, in itself, demonstrate that the issue and receipt of stores was well regulated. Indeed, it may well suggest the reverse. A wanton disregard for form characterised Navy Commissioner William Burrell. In August 1626 John Wells informed Coke that several things were 'obliquely carried' in Deptford's stores.¹⁶⁶ His letter seems to have prompted a series of questions put to him and to John Acworth by the Special Navy Commissioners that December.¹⁶⁷ Acworth alleged that warrants authorising the issue of stores, which were supposed to be validated by the signatures of at least two Navy Commissioners, had been

162 P.R.O., SP14/215, p.127.

163 P.R.O., SP16/332/44, 28 Sept. 1636, Edisbury to Nicholas.

164 P.R.O., SP16/264 fo.136, 27 June 1635.

165 P.R.O., SP16/301/23, 5 Nov. 1635, Pennington to Nicholas.

166 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64889 fo.107, 26 Aug. 1626.

167 P.R.O., SP16/45 fos.18-9.

sent by Burrell bearing only his own name.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, Burrell had allegedly often sent the same warrant for stores in the names of different men. Dr. McGowan has argued that Burrell was unfairly hounded by Coke through the Special Commission.¹⁶⁹ However, the testimonies it obtained demonstrate that he exhibited an arrogance about the scope of his own authority and a cavalier attitude towards proper procedure which fully justified Coke's doubts about him at the time.¹⁷⁰

Perhaps the most flagrant mismanagement of the stores occurred, not under the auspices of the Navy Commission, but under the government of their immediate successors. Among the charges levelled against the Principal Officers in 1631 was the allegation that stores were received and issued without sufficient warrant and that they were not surveyed on receipt by the resident Master Attendant, Master Shipwright or Clerk of the Cheque.¹⁷¹ A good deal seems to have been put right in 1631, but as late as 1639 the Woolwich storekeeper, William Acworth, thought the system could be tightened up still further. Echoing his father thirteen years earlier, he pointed out that stores were frequently issued without a receipt.¹⁷² Acworth's memorandum is a timely reminder that, although the Navy's administrators went some way towards effecting beneficial improvements in the 1630s, reform clearly had its limits.

168 P.R.O., SP16/42/61, 22 Dec. 1626.

169 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy', pp.273-4.

170 Burrell was said by colleagues to have behaved as though he was Comptroller of the Navy: P.R.O., SP16/45 fo.15.

171 Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2541, fos.175v-176.

172 Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285), fo.284, 'Considerations presented by Mr. Acworth, 1639'. For his father's comments, see above, n.167.

V. Timekeeping

The measure of the efficiency of any administration can, to some extent, be taken from its attitude towards time-keeping and attendance. In this respect, the Caroline Navy was surprisingly well regulated. Accurate time-keeping was aided by yard clocks at Chatham New Dock and Woolwich, although not at Chatham Old Dock, Deptford and Portsmouth.¹⁷³ Each yard had its own officer, known by his full title as the Clerk of the Prick and Cheque, who kept an attendance register and who was responsible for ringing a bell to summon the men to work. If Elizabethan practice still counted for anything, he mustered the workforce three times a day during summer and twice daily during winter.¹⁷⁴ Before November 1640, when Northumberland specifically prohibited the practice, yard musters were probably conducted at set times.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, in their instructions for the governing of Chatham yard, issued sometime after December 1624, the Navy Commissioners demonstrated their familiarity with the tricks of the shirker when they ordered that anyone who only presented himself at roll-call was to lose his wages.¹⁷⁶

The Clerk of the Cheque was not the only officer who kept an eye on the workforce. The Master Shipwrights and the Clerks of the Ropeyard

173 The earliest references to Woolwich clockhouse I have found are dated 1635: N.M.M., MS 88/044, Woolwich yard account, Michaelmas Ordinary, 1635. On Chatham New Dock see P.R.O., E351/2269 (Navy Treasurer's 1630 account) n.f., & E351/2270 (1631 account) n.f., payments to Thomas Marsingham; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1655 fos.35,40, payments to Marsingham & his widow.

174 P.R.O., SP16/277/28, 30 Oct. 1630, Roger Langford's explanation of the Clerk's duties in the 1590s. Buckingham's Admiralty instructions (n.d.) said that workmen were to be mustered morning & evening, & then as often as necessary: Brit. Libr., Sloane MS. 3232 fo.149v. Northumberland's instructions of 1640 said they should be mustered 'thrice or twice att ye least ev'lerly day': Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A193 fo.95v. 175 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A193 fo.95v.

176 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C159/5), n.d., Chatham yard orders.

were also timekeepers in their own right. It was, for instance, the responsibility of a Master Shipwright to time the absence of any of his workforce with an hour-glass, and in the event of his own absence the task fell to the Porter of the yard.¹⁷⁷ However, it was not within a Master Shipwright's authority to sanction members of his own workforce to take long periods of absence. When in 1638 the Master Carpenter of the *Swiftsure* approached Portsmouth's resident Master Shipwright for leave of absence to build a bark for his own use, he was told to get a warrant from a Principal Officer.¹⁷⁸

Contemporaries clearly appreciated the importance of daily registration. Commenting upon a proposal to maintain a number of carpenters permanently in pay, Edisbury advised Coke in 1634 that the scheme should be conditional on requiring the carpenters 'alwayes to be at cheque for their wages, otherwise as good wthlthout them, for if they be not proprelie ymployed their being will increase charge needleslie'.¹⁷⁹ Among the yard workforce, only the Master Shipwrights and their Assistants were not answerable to the Clerk of the Cheque for their permanent attendance, although they were paid as if they were constantly present. This discrepancy offered the unconscionable the liberty to spend time in their own yards at the King's expense. Edisbury rightly considered this absurd, and in 1632 he rattled the Master Shipwright Henry Goddard with the suggestion that the Master Shipwrights should

177 P.R.O., SP16/119/69, an undated set of Admiralty orders (see under Porter's duties, art.3). These may have been drawn up by the Admiralty Commissioners Francis Lord Cottington & Sir Francis Windebank: P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.388.

178 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9299 fo.185, 8 March 1639, Edward Boate's objections to Mr. Steventon.

179 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64908 fo.7, 19 March 1634, Edisbury to Coke.

'worke as other men doe, & be under prick and cheque'.¹⁸⁰ Four years later his successor as Paymaster observed that absenteeism had caused the wage bill for the construction of the *Leopard* and *Swallow* to exceed the comparable bill for two much larger ships built in 1633.¹⁸¹

The workforce employed under an Assistant or Master Shipwright worked every day except Sunday, and was supposed to be in attendance for twelve hours each day, between six in the morning and six in the evening, although the hours were adjusted according to season. However, allowances of half an hour for breakfast, an hour for dinner, and half an hour for 'dinner and sleeping tyme', eroded the actual working day to ten hours.¹⁸² In 1625 the two hours permitted to the carpenters for eating and relaxing apparently did not extend to the workmen in Chatham roperyad, who in April refused to work their normal twelve hour day, demanding equal treatment with the carpenters.¹⁸³ By contrast, thirty-five labourers in the Deptford timber yard worked overtime during Lady Quarter, 1629.¹⁸⁴

It was not enough to ensure that workmen arrived and left on time. Equally important was the need to ensure they did not waste time, either by working too slowly or doing jobs which they had not been employed to do. This formed an important theme in Northumberland's instructions of 1640. For the first time, minimum productivity levels in the ropehouses were to be ensured by the ropehouse Clerk, who was authorised to cheque men not merely for their absences, but also for failing to spin a

180 P.R.O., SP16/222/57, 29 Aug. 1632, Goddard to Coke.

181 *Hollond's Discourses*, p.29.

182 P.R.O., SP16/119/69, see under Master Shipwright's duties.

183 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.31v, 27 April 1625, Downing to Coke.

184 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9299 fo.8.

specified number of threads per day.¹⁸⁵ Northumberland also decreed that the work of carpenters and joiners was to be inspected at least once a week by the Clerk of the Cheque to prevent them from working privately for other men. This was not a new injunction, however, nor was it without flaw, for it was never specified whose responsibility it was to prevent the Clerk from privately employing workmen himself. In March 1639 Portsmouth's Clerk, Edward Steventon, was accused of hiring yard workmen to make 'drawing Tables, Chist of drawers, boxes, side Cubbards, presses, or what ells his house wantted furnitur for'. The veracity of Steventon's defence, that these items were for the use of members of the Navy Board whenever they visited the yard, is irrelevant to the question of his accountability.¹⁸⁶ Finally, Northumberland forbade the yard Porter from keeping a tap in the gatehouse, which often acted as a haven for loiterers. Instead, Porters who insisted on retailing beer were to be permitted to do so only in summer, from a house in the middle of the yard, and then only through a serving window, so that those who imbibed there could easily be seen by their superiors.¹⁸⁷

Timekeeping in labour discipline is not normally associated with the early seventeenth century.¹⁸⁸ Yet in the Caroline Navy attention to time was a part of the daily routine in the yards, even if the mechanisms

185 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A193 fo.102.

186 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9299 fos.184-5.

187 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A193 fo.103v. The Navy Commissioners had earlier cracked down on the problem at Chatham: Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A455 fos.115r-v, 19 Dec. 1619, Navy Commissioners to Buckingham. However, the problem persisted into the later seventeenth century: *Naval Miscellany*, v. 135-6, 7 Aug. 1678, Sir Richard Beach to Navy Board.

188 E.P. Thompson talks of important changes in the apprehension of time in western Europe, 1300-1650, but he has not charted the chronology of change in any detail: E.P. Thompson 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*, xxxviii, (1967), 56-97.

available to measure its passage were undoubtedly crude by modern standards and the system of oversight employed was relatively unsophisticated. Viewed from Woolwich clocktower, the quality of naval administration looks better than Oppenheim thought.

VI. Theft

Just as it was important to control the hours of attendance of the yard workforce, so too it was important to ensure that the yards were not made the hunting grounds of thieves. During daytime the Navy's main line of defence against theft was the Porter. Each yard had its own Porter, except Chatham, where the division of the yard into the old and new docks meant there were two. Except at mealtimes, he was forbidden to permit anyone to leave the yard unless they had first informed the Clerk of the Cheque and the resident Master Shipwright. During the day the Porter manned the yard's principal gate and posted warders at the rest. All were instructed to forbid access to the civilian population.¹⁸⁹

Perhaps the Porter's most important responsibility was the gate keys. At night these were conferred on the watch, except at Deptford, where, sometime after the dissolution of the Navy Commission, they were entrusted to the Clerk of the Cheque, Edward Falkener. In the short term this was a mistake, for it merely inflamed the enmity between Falkener and the Storekeeper, John Wells. Yet this vendetta also served to enhance the quality of administration, for the Admiralty subsequently ordered two locks to be placed on the gates, allotting one key to the Storekeeper and one to the Clerk.¹⁹⁰

189 Brit. Lib., Sloane MS. 3232 fo.115r-v; P.R.O., SP16/119/69.

190 P.R.O., SP16/185/87, SP16/275/47, SP16/277/65.

During the night hours the yards were theoretically secured against theft by the watch. At Chatham, where the yard occupied a seventy-five acre site, the watch numbered just four unarmed men during the mid-Jacobean period.¹⁹¹ By December 1624 there were only two watchmen, 'whilch cannot secure one p[ar]t of the yard'.¹⁹² It was not until the end of the 1620s that the number was increased. In 1629-30 there were six men on duty, while by 1632 there were eight.¹⁹³

The yard at Deptford was the Navy's main supply depot and housed the naval treasury. As such it should have merited a greater number of watchmen than Chatham. However, there were never more than five or six men on duty at any one time, which meant the watch was 'but a Scar-Crowe if any stronge or malicious Attempts were made against them'.¹⁹⁴ Matters were scarcely any better at Woolwich, where the night-watch normally numbered just two men.¹⁹⁵ None of the yards were as exposed as Portsmouth, however, where there was no watch provided at all.¹⁹⁶

Ships in harbour were guarded separately by members of the skeleton crew of shipkeepers. This was as much to protect the ships against surprise attack as to ward against thieves. Watchmen were supposed to be appointed by the resident Master Attendant, who was required to visit

191 Longleat, Coventry Papers, vol. 117, 'Observations of the Navy' (misdated 1630) fo.18. On the size of the yard, see P.R.O., SP16/279/20, 'Observations on the Plot [i.e. map] of Chatham'.

192 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64882 fo.49, 24 Dec. 1624, Boate to Coke. Two weeks later the shipwright Henry Goddard also told Coke that it was impossible to secure the yard with just 2 watchmen: *ibid.*, fo.80.

193 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649B, fos.23v,206v,214v,222; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1655 fos.6,13,20v,27v.

194 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9294 fo.319, 'Observations at Deptford', 1634.

195 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649A fos.43r-v,44v,45,46-7; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649B fos.84-5v. The watch was temporarily doubled in 1636-7 during the construction of the *Sovereign of the Seas*: N.M.M., MS. 88/044, Woolwich dockyard accounts, Michaelmas Quarter, 1636-7.

196 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.234, surcharge proposed on the 1632 Ordinary estimate.

them once or twice a week to see they had been posted and were alert.¹⁹⁷ In addition, boatswains were paid an allowance to provide watch-lights.¹⁹⁸ Under the auspices of Navy Commissioner Thomas Norreys, the obligation to maintain an adequate guard aboard each ship at Chatham was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. In 1621 Sir Guilford Slingsby found 'but 38 men in the watche, ther being in pay 153 and those fewe boyes and mens servaunts'.¹⁹⁹ Slingsby had an axe to grind, having been sequestered in 1618, but his findings square with a report submitted by Norreys' successor, Joshua Downing, who observed so much absenteeism and drunkenness that 'a man might have rowed on bord and do what mischeife hee would without being discovered'. Downing therefore suggested that the gunners at Upnor Castle and the shipboard watchmen should toll their bells every fifteen minutes to notify each other that they were alert. He also advocated the use of passwords and the overnight detention of all small vessels found rowing about the river at night.²⁰⁰ It is not clear whether Downing was able to implement these changes, but in March 1625 he told Coke that he had doubled the watch aboard each ship and fobidden the night-time movement of boats.²⁰¹

There was no guarantee that the watch would reduce theft. 'Generally the watchman is the thief and the shipkeeper the cabin breaker' opined John Hollond.²⁰² Similar sentiments had been expressed by Edisbury thirty years earlier when he remarked that the guards at the gates were

197 P.R.O., SP16/119/69, q.v. Master Attendants' duties.

198 For example, Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1655 fos.35v,54v.

199 K.A.O., U269/1/ON8183, 17 Feb. 1623, Slingsby to [Middlesex].

200 P.R.O., SP16/13/72, paper by Downing, endorsed by Coke, n.d.

201 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.1, 29 Mar. 1625.

202 *Hollond's Discourses*, pp.18-9. In 1625 Downing wanted to prevent shipkeepers lying aboard ships in dry dock at night because they had broken open houses in Chatham yard: P.R.O., SP14/182/29.

mostly 'of the meanest and poorest sort of people...to be corrupted either to pillfer themselves or to winck at others'.²⁰³ On the other hand, he evidently felt that these traits did not extend to the boatswainry, which formed part of the hard-core of the Navy's shipkeepers. In 1635, while he was trying to convince the Admiralty that it would be safer to keep rigging aboard ship rather than in the storehouse, he dismissed fears that this would make it easier for boatswains to embezzle rope, averring that 'I never knew the king suffred 10li loss in that nature in 30 years tyme'.²⁰⁴

Edisbury undoubtedly overstated the honesty of the boatswainry. Two boatswains were sacked for stealing rope in 1624, as was the boatswain of the *St. Andrew* in 1636.²⁰⁵ On the other hand, the Admiralty's condemnation of six boatswains in 1638 for returning an apparently insufficient remain of cordage at the end of the previous year sounds unconvincing when set against the responses of the boatswains concerned.²⁰⁶ Thus, boatswain Cowdall claimed that the reason his cordage expenditure seemed excessive was that his rope allowance had been reduced after his ship had been redesignated a third rate.²⁰⁷ Similarly, Boatswain Lownes explained a small remain on the grounds that

203 Longleat, Coventry Papers, vol. 117 fo.18.

204 P.R.O., SP16/297/7, 3 Sept. 1635, Edisbury to Coke.

205 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C160/26), 'A noate of the stealths of Botswains'; P.R.O., SP16/326/1, 10 June 1636, Benjamin Woolner to Admiralty; P.R.O., SP16/335/25, 7 Nov. 1636, notes by Nicholas.

206 P.R.O., SP16/353 fo.88, 13 Feb. 1638, Admiralty to Principal Officers. The Admiralty subsequently agreed to lift the suspension of all 6 boatswains, but sureties were ordered to be taken from them for their future good conduct, & their pay was docked for the time they were suspended: *ibid.*, fo.90v, 17 Feb. 1638, Admiralty to Principal Officers.

207 P.R.O., SP16/383/40, Feb. 1638, petition of Henry Cowdall.

his ship had lost no less than three topmasts.²⁰⁸ For his part, Boatswain Norgate pleaded that he had put the safety of his ship before the size of his remain.²⁰⁹

The Admiralty's hamfisted treatment of the boatswainry may have had unfortunate consequences. Writing in 1638, John Hollond asserted that most boatswains preferred not to exceed their cordage allowance, even if their ships were provided with bad quality rope, in case they were punished as thieves.²¹⁰ The Admiralty's clumsiness contrasts with the more subtle methods used by the Navy Commissioners to combat theft. Employing the boatswain John Rockwell as their informant, they apprehended the culprits responsible for stealing cordage and gunpowder in 1624.²¹¹ This was the right way to proceed, and although there was no further use of spies, there were often junior officers who were willing to incriminate their superiors in the hope of their own preferment. Thus the gunner's mate of the *Tenth Whelp* disclosed the illicit sale of no less than nine barrels of his ship's powder by the master gunner in 1635 in the expectation that he would be appointed in the latter's stead.²¹²

The discovery of theft was as much a symptom of administrative failure as it was of success. These apparently conflicting interpretations are really the opposing faces of the same coin, and a single document may say as much about the one as about the other. Rockwell's revelations in

208 P.R.O., SP16/376/92, n.d., petition of Anthony Lowmes. For the loss of 2 of these topmasts in his ship, the *St. George*, see W.S.R.O., Leconfield MS., H.M.C. 36 (Northumberland's letter book, n.f.), 3 July 1637, letters by Northumberland to Charles I & Secretary Coke.

209 P.R.O., SP16/537/80, n.d., petition of Thomas Norgate.

210 *Hollond's Discourses*, p.76.

211 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C160/26), n.d. Rockwell was paid a reward of £30 for his information: P.R.O., E351/2262, n.f.

212 P.R.O., SP16/298/71, journal of Capt. Wm Smith, entries of 20-2 July; P.R.O., HCA1/50, n.f., Rice Thomas' examination, 13 June 1636.

1624 represented a significant coup, yet one observer remarked at the time that they 'causeth an eville aspertio[n] to falle upon ye Com[mission]io[n], under whose gover[nmen]te thes[e] Boatswaines doe thus flourishe'.²¹³ An administration which drew attention to theft by trying to catch offenders necessarily ran the risk of such censure.

It is to the Navy Commissioners' credit, therefore, that they never condemned themselves to inaction as a result. In 1626 they attempted to suppress the widespread frauds surrounding the traditional right of shipwrights to take wood chips. Chips were generally considered surplus, although a certain amount was needed as fuel for the pitchkettle. Strictly speaking, only carpenters in Ordinary were entitled to chips. By 1625, however, Joshua Downing observed that the practice had extended to caulkers, housecarpenters, joiners '& their wives & children', who

every Satterday goe laden away, wherby not onely all the old planck & timber is taken,..not leaving enough to heat the pitchkettle, but if they cann gett new deales, new planckes, Bilge blocks & the like...in a corner where they are not seene, they will splitt them out for chipps.

Those workmen who were genuinely entitled to chips sometimes deliberately sabotaged their work to create them, '& in their...baggs of chipps they oftentimes carry away bolts of yron, Spikes, nayles, night-lights, etc. so as I verily believe 2 or 300li p[er] ann[u]m is lost by these abuses'. Downing therefore recommended the abolition of the right to chips, and the compensation of carpenters in Ordinary by a cash payment.²¹⁴ The idea was duly adopted: carpenters were to be allowed a penny a day over their normal wages, but anyone found transporting chips in future would forfeit both composition and chips.²¹⁵

213 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64881 fo.140, 20 July 1624, Goddard to Coke.

214 P.R.O., SP14/182/29.

215 P.R.O., E351/2264, n.f., payment to Chatham shipwrights.

Despite Downing's efforts, the attempt to stamp out the abuses connected with chips represents one of the Navy's worst administrative failures. For 'chip money' was evidently not paid after 1626. During the war years, when the Exchequer lacked the funds to pay even basic naval costs, there was presumably insufficient money available to pay the carpenters their composition. By 1631 the issue was once more on the agenda for reform.²¹⁶ However, the Admiralty failed to make any headway, for in March 1634 a revitalised Navy Board complained of the 'great quantitie of wood carried awaie by the workmen three times a daie'.²¹⁷ The Admiralty therefore reiterated the order issued in 1626, and ordered the prosecution of a Deptford shipwright, Daniel Larkin, who had filled a lighter full of chips.²¹⁸ Once more the drive for reform was halted. Although chip money was paid to a pulleymaker in 1635 and to two carpenters in 1636, it was evidently not paid thereafter.²¹⁹ Moreover, when Larkin claimed that the charges against him amounted to victimisation they were dropped in favour of simple admonition.²²⁰ By 1640 the Navy was back to square one. Northumberland's instructions, while ordering the search of workmen leaving the yards, merely prohibited the 'carrieing away of Tymbleirs instid of Chips'.²²¹ The Navy's failure to solve the chips issue is the exception to the rule that the Admiralty succeeded in achieving wholesale reform in 1631.

It is far from clear why reform failed. Perhaps the Admiralty simply

216 Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2541 fo.180.

217 P.R.O., SP16/263/19, 20 Mar. 1634, Principal Officers to Admiralty. The letter inadvertently bears witness to the absence of a collective memory.

218 P.R.O., SP16/264 fos.47-8, 15 Nov. 1634.
219 P.R.O., E351/2274, n.f., payment to Richard Mapliden; E351/2277, n.f., payment to 2 of Nathaniel Apslyn's servants.

220 P.R.O., SP16/272/72, 29 July 1634, Edisbury to Nicholas; SP16/264 fo.49, 18 Nov. 1634, Admiralty to Principal Officers.

221 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A193 fo.96.

bit off more than it could chew. Forty years later, in 1674, the then Board of Admiralty forbade the taking of chips on the grounds that 'an increase of wages hath heretofore been expressly made to ye workmen in satisfaccon for what they could pretend of benefit from ye libertie of carrying out Chipps'.²²² Yet all this achieved was a slowdown of work in the yards by men who claimed that 'they cannot live without their chips'.²²³ This precisely echoed Larkin in 1634, who had complained of small wages and seasonal employment.²²⁴ In the face of such opposition, the Admiralty was forced to back down.²²⁵ Viewed from the perspective of the mid-1670s, the Admiralty's failure to eliminate the abuses associated with chips in the 1630s seems more understandable.

The Admiralty's inability to overcome this problem is a telling reminder that there were limits to reform. Nevertheless, the chips' question was scarcely a momentous issue, for neither the construction nor the repair of ships seems to have been seriously impeded as a consequence. Indeed, by comparison with the frauds practised in the forty years or so before 1618 the Caroline Navy was a model of good government.²²⁶ Scandalous misconduct on the scale perpetrated by Sir Robert Mansell and his colleagues was never the hallmark of Caroline naval administration.

222 P.R.O., ADM2/1, fos.172v-173, 18 July 1674, Admiralty to Navy Board; *ibid.*, fos.179v-180, 4 Nov. 1674, Admiralty to Navy Board.

223 *Naval Miscellany*, v. 111, 18 Nov. 1673, Sir Richard Beach to Navy Board; *ibid.*, p.123, 21 Jan. 1675, Sir Anthony Deane to Navy Board.

224 P.R.O., SP16/272/77, Larkin's petition to Admiralty, received 31 July 1634.

225 *Naval Miscellany*, v. 131, 27 June 1677, Admiralty to Navy Board.

226 For evidence relating to one of the most infamous of Mansell's frauds, see *Commissions of Enquiry*, pp.11-22,26-8, (various depositions taken in May 1608).

PART TWO

FINANCE

Chapter 3

THE MECHANICS OF NAVAL FINANCE

I. Basic Finance

The Navy's finances were not monolithic. Instead, they can broadly be divided between ordinary and extraordinary payments. The bedrock of naval finance was the Ordinary. This was the Navy's basic running cost, and it was divided in two. The first part comprised the Navy's unalterable harbour costs, such as the wages and victuals of shipkeepers. The second part paid for the annual Channel squadron of four ships and pinnaces, although it has sometimes been said that the Ordinary excluded sea costs.¹ Unlike the Ordnance Office, the Navy's Ordinary was not fixed, but was re-calculated at the beginning of every year.

The rest of the Navy's finances were considered extraordinary. This means that they dealt with costs which, in theory, were not incurred each year as a matter of course. War finance, shipbuilding, the replenishment of the magazine and the payment of arrears were all embraced under this heading. Like the Ordinary, extraordinary expenditure was sometimes classified in estimates as either harbour or sea costs.

Extraordinary payments usually merited separate Privy Seals, but during the 1620s it was not uncommon for estimates to combine Ordinary and extraordinary costs.² In 1631 the sum of £7,000 was actually added

1 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under Buckingham', p.88. Dr. McGowan has been misled by an exclusive reliance on the Navy Treasurer's accounts, which list harbour charges as 'ordinary' & everything else, including the manufacture of cordage, as 'extraordinary'. In fact, Ordinary estimates usually divided the Ordinary into harbour & sea costs. For examples, see P.R.O., SP16/158/2, SP16/183/4, SP16/210/1, SP16/226/20.

2 P.R.O., SP14/158/2 (1624); SP14/182/55 (1625); P.R.O., SP16/52/43 (1627); Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fos.136-7 (1629).

to that year's Ordinary estimate to help pay for the magazine.³

Perversely, extraordinary expenditure ate up more resources each year than did the Ordinary, even during peacetime. In 1633, which was a quiet year in terms of naval operations, the Exchequer issued no less than ten extraordinary Privy Seals, authorising payments of more than £61,600.⁴ By contrast, the Ordinary that year amounted to just £27,792, a figure which includes a surcharge of £1,157.⁵

The distinction between Ordinary and extraordinary was briefly abandoned between 1619 and 1623. During this period the bedrock of naval finance was not the Ordinary, but the proposals laid out in the Navy Commissioners' Report of 1618. These projected the cost of the Navy each year for the following five years. They included the Ordinary, but they also provided for the annual construction of two ships and the development of Chatham dockyard.⁶ However, the Commissioners did not create a monolithic financial structure. There were inevitably additional, unforeseen expenses, such as the cost of the fleet which was sent to Algiers in 1620-1. These were normally dealt with in separate Privy Seals, although in the case of the harbour charges of two ships which were unexpectedly added to the Navy after 1618, the cost was placed on the annual naval estimate.⁷

3 P.R.O., SP16/183/5 (1631 estimate); Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C173/6), 'A Proposition for the Navie', by Coke.

4 P.R.O., E403/2567 (Privy Seal book) fos.10v,16v-17,18v-19v,21v, 26r-v,27v,28.

5 *Ibid.*, fo.35v (surcharge); P.R.O., SP16/226/20 (1633 estimate).

6 *Commissions of Enquiry*, pp.295-6,279.

7 P.R.O., SP14/119/56 (1621 estimate); SP14/127/23 (1622 estimate); SP14/137/6 (1623 estimate). The 2 ships were the *Convertive* and the *Charles*. The *Convertive* had been built as the *Destiny* by Sir Walter Raleigh, but was confiscated by the Crown after his execution. The *Charles* was a naval pinnace which was thought to have been lost in Scotland in 1616, but which turned up in 1621.

Most of the Navy's funds were handled by one of three receivers. These were the Navy Treasurer, the Victualler, and the Lieutenant of the Ordnance. However, many naval officials received all or part of their salary direct from the Exchequer.⁸ Few pensions were ever paid to naval officials, but those that were permitted were also paid directly by the Exchequer rather than by the naval treasury.⁹ Between 1627 and 1629 the Comptroller of the Household, Sir John Savile, was authorised to receive and disburse the funds needed to furnish a squadron of armed colliers himself.¹⁰ In 1635 the Victualler got permission for Hampshire's Ship Money to be paid direct to Portsmouth rather than to the Navy Treasurer in London on the grounds of commonsense.¹¹

In 1625 Buckingham received £49,500 from the Exchequer for the use of the Navy.¹² It was unheard of that the Lord Admiral should receive and issue funds himself, and the suspicions of the 1626 parliament were duly aroused. Buckingham was accused of subverting the customary accounting procedure, 'there being no means by matter of record to charge either treasurer or victualer [*sic*] of the navy with those sums'.¹³ This was not entirely well-founded, for Buckingham issued £30,000 of this money

8 The Principal Officers received their entire salaries direct from the Exchequer, except Phineas Pett, who received his from the Navy.

9 Pensions were paid at onetime or another to Phineas Pett, Sir Thomas Button, Matthew Sylam (a retired gunner), John Jackson (an elderly purser) & Anthony Crozier (a ship master who distinguished himself at Ré in 1627). Records of payment are scattered through the Exchequer's issue books, but for an example of a payment of £90 to Phineas Pett on 23 Feb. 1631, see P.R.O., E403/1743, n.f.

10 P.R.O., E351/2595-7 (Savile's accounts).

11 C.S.P.D. 1635, pp.503,509.

12 P.R.O., E403/1735, n.f., £30,000 paid on 15 Jan. by a Privy Seal dated 11 Jan.; *ibid.*, payment of £19,500 on 28 Jan., 11,18,25 Feb., 4,11 March by a Privy Seal for £20,000 dated 20 January. The remaining £500 was ordered to be paid on 9 May (P.R.O., E403/2605, p.99, but it was not paid that year (P.R.O., E403/2830A, p.101).

13 *Lords' Journals*. III. 615. I am grateful to Prof. Maija Jansson for this reference.

to the Victualler, who accounted for it in the normal way.¹⁴

There is no evidence that the Duke handed over the remaining £19,500 to the Navy. However, shortly after he was paid this money the Duke loaned the King £20,000.¹⁵ This would seem to indicate that the £19,500 paid to the Duke was a repayment, perhaps of money that Buckingham had lent to the Navy in 1624.¹⁶ Though this suggests that Buckingham was not guilty of embezzlement, it does not explain why he was permitted to act as a receiver of naval funds in the first place.¹⁷ The King's decision to dissolve the parliament rather than allow the Duke to face impeachment proceedings meant that Buckingham was never forced to give the reason.

The process of obtaining money from the Exchequer involved considerable paperwork and effort. The Navy Board calculated the cost and submitted an estimate to the Admiralty for its approval and signature. The estimate was then sent to the Lord Treasurer, who issued a warrant for a Privy Seal to be drawn up. This could evidently take some time. One of the tasks of the Navy Treasurer's clerks was to solicit for Privy Seals, for which they were paid an allowance.¹⁸ In 1620 Sir Robert

14 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under Buckingham', p.251; P.R.O., E351/2425, n.f., (Victualler's account, 1625); Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A456 fo.2 (abstract of Victualler's 1625 account).

15 P.R.O., E403/2605, pp.348-9, 31 May 1627, Privy Seal for paying Buckingham interest on £20,000 loaned to the King on 25 Jan. & 25 March 1625.

16 Lockyer states that Buckingham loaned the Navy £15,000 in April 1624: *Buckingham*, p.193.

17 It is equally mysterious why Buckingham ceased to act as a receiver. On 20 April 1625 the Lord Treasurer ordered a Privy Seal to be drawn for £80,000, which was to be paid to the Duke 'for the navy to furnish it with victualls and other necessaryes' (P.R.O., E404/234, unnumbered item, Marlborough to Robert Long). Three days later the King ordered Lord Privy Seal Worcester to authorise this (P.R.O., PS02/61, unnumbered item). However, the Privy Seal was cancelled shortly after: P.R.O., IND1/6746 (Privy Seal Office docket book), n.f., April 1625, docket marked 'vacat'.

18 For instance, P.R.O., E351/2274, n.f., payment of £43 11s 2d to John Hollond, William Steventon, etc.

Mansell, who was then commanding the ships destined to sail for Algiers, expressed surprise that he had been sent a Privy Seal 'wthout any solicitation at all'.¹⁹ Once a Privy Seal had been obtained, the next step was to badger the Exchequer for the money. This was usually paid in instalments and by a specified date. More often than not, the Exchequer paid the accountant direct. Frequently, however, revenue was assigned to the Navy at source. This meant that the money never entered the Exchequer, but was paid to the Navy by an individual revenue collector.²⁰ Usually, payment was in specie, but on a rare number of occasions the Navy Treasurer was authorised to make payments in land.²¹

The physical transportation of coin from the Exchequer was a costly business in itself, and the Navy Treasurer, who carried his money to the Deptford naval treasury, was allowed a portage of thirty shillings for every thousand pounds.²² Once the money had been transported to Deptford, it might be sent to Portsmouth or Bristol, where it was used to pay off ships' crews. During the war years of the 1620s, however, the naval treasury used inland bills of exchange in settling payments at Plymouth, presumably to avoid the need to transport coin such a distance.²³ There is also evidence that, as early as 1622, Capt. Sir

19 K.A.O., Sackville MS., U269/1/ON311, 6 Aug. 1620, Mansell to Cranfield.

20 P.R.O., T[reasury] 56/1 fo.55v, 29 Sept. 1635, 3 letters by the Treasury Commissioners to the Clerk of the Hanaper, the collectors of the northern Impositions, & the Farmers of the Customs; P.R.O., T56/4 p.45, 8 Aug. 1637, Juxon to Lord Goring.

21 Cordage bought from Alderman Freeman was paid for in land in 1630: see below, pp.357-8. In Oct. 1632 various royal feoffees were instructed to convey land in Denbighshire to persons nominated by Sir William Russell: P.R.O., SO3/10, n.f. Russell used these lands to pay off a debt to a Ratcliff mariner: Clwyd R.O., D/E/317, 27 July 1633, Russell & Edisbury to Mr. Favell.

22 Portage payments are listed at the end of the Treasurer's accounts.

23 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.105, 12 May 1626, Buckingham to Pennington; Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. C827 fo.61 (testimony of William

Thomas Button received bills of exchange at Bristol to pay for the victualling of his ship, probably for the same reason.²⁴ From 1630 Ireland was required to pay for its own peacetime naval defence, but widespread piracy made it too dangerous to transfer specie from Dublin to Bristol. The obvious solution was to use bills of exchange, but finding someone who would give bills on Bristol was not always easy.²⁵ Moreover, bills of exchange were expensive. In 1634 Wentworth reckoned that sixpence in every pound was lost in the exchange process.²⁶

There were essentially two types of payments in the Navy, as Sir John Coke explained to the Crown Revenue Commissioners in 1626, 'the one upon bills...the other upon bookes'.²⁷ Bills were the receipts issued to suppliers after they had delivered their stores. They were paid by the Navy Treasurer, who checked that they were signed by at least two of his colleagues and that they expressed both the name of the supplier and the quantity and the quality of the stores provided.²⁸ The second form of payments consisted of wages. Registers of men in pay were kept in every yard by the resident Clerk of the Cheque, and at sea by each ship's purser. No payment of wages could be made unless these books were presented to the Navy Treasurer or his senior clerk, who was unofficially known as the Paymaster.²⁹

Plumleigh, 17 May 1637); P.R.O., E112/170/65 (Bespitch v. Bagg, 1632). It is usually said that inland bills were not used until the 1650s: J. Milnes Holden 'Bills of Exchange During the 17th Century', *Law Quarterly Review*, lxvii (1951), 234-5.

24 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A455 fo.123, 6 March 1622, Navy Commissioners to Middlesex.

25 P.R.O., SP63/253/51, 5 July 1632, Loftus & Cork to Privy Council.

26 P.R.O., SP63/254/123, 16 May 1634, Wentworth to Admiralty.

27 University of London, Goldsmiths' MS. 195, i. fo.28, 9 Sept. 1626.

28 Brit. Libr. Add. MS. 64876 fo.55, 10 July 1618, paper by the Surveyor of the Navy, Sir Richard Bingley.

29 For details of registration in the dockyards, see above, pp.110-12.

Sea wages were based upon a fixed rate known as the 'medium'. As Dr. McGowan has explained, the medium represented average rather than actual pay.³⁰ The main purpose of this was to facilitate the rapid calculation of the wage bill for estimates. However, the medium served an additional function, for the pay scale was so constructed that the medium always yielded a small surplus. This extra money was regarded as a float, from which deserving individuals might be rewarded, and small expenses, such as the repair of boats, might be defrayed. When, in 1621, Coke advocated doubling the pay of naval captains, he nevertheless recognised that the medium of the larger ships would permit an even greater level of increase. However, as he told Buckingham, 'the Medium was appointed for Estimats and not for palments, & if it bee al paid in wages, the demands wil herafter bee increased for manie other charges w[hilch] the Mediu[m] did defray'.³¹ It was thus a cause of some alarm to the Admiralty Secretary that in June 1630 the Deptford Storekeeper, John Wells, sought to obtain a grant of the medium's surplus in lieu of his arrears of pay. If this was permitted, Nicholas wrote, the cost of those things which had hitherto been met out of the surplus would have to be paid on new estimates, 'w[hilch] will bring decay & distracon to ye s[er]vice'.³² Nicholas was evidently successful in his attempt to block Wells, however, for the following month the Storekeeper was granted an alternative source of funds. This was the money reserved for chaplains which, because many ships had not actually been served by a preacher, had not been paid.³³

30 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under Buckingham', pp.102-3.

31 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64877 fo.10v, 16 July 1621.

32 P.R.O., SP16/169/73, Nicholas to [Admiralty?], June 1630.

33 P.R.O., E403/2567 fos.129v-130, Privy Seal, 31 July 1630. The King actually agreed to grant this money to Wells in Jan. 1630:

Apart from Ship Money, which was paid direct to the Navy Treasurer between 1634 and 1640, the Navy's main source of supply was the Exchequer. However, the purses of the Navy's own employees also formed an additional source of funds. Hitherto this has not been sufficiently appreciated by historians, whose view of officeholding in the early seventeenth century has tended to be dominated by the question of corruption. Yet most of the Navy's senior officials, and even a few minor ones too, were obliged at one time or another to subsidise the Navy out of their own pockets. It is to this neglected aspect of naval finance and early Stuart officeholding that we must now turn.

II. The Private Purse

The private purse of the Navy's Victualler helped to insulate the Exchequer against rising prices in foodstuffs. During periods when prices fell or remained static a Victualler might do very well for himself. Looking back to Apsley's procurement of the place in 1612, his daughter, the memoirist Lucy Hutchinson, described it as being 'then both of credit and greate revenue'.³⁴ Nonetheless, the Victualler's profit margin was by no means guaranteed. Essentially he was a farmer and a speculator, who serviced the Navy at a fixed rate specified in his contract. If market prices fell then he stood to make a profit by pocketing the difference between the amount he spent and the amount he could claim from the Crown. However, if prices rose even marginally he stood to make a loss. Against either eventuality, the disadvantaged

Hants.R.O., Shelley-Rolls MS. 18M51/636/57, Wells' petition, & the King's reply.

34 Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, (London, 1806), p.10.

party might terminate the contract, but only after giving twelve months' notice.³⁵ From the Admiralty's point of view such an arrangement offered certain advantages, such as enabling it to budget accurately. Even if real prices fell the Admiralty was disadvantaged only to the extent that it was unable to effect an immediate economy. Conversely, if they rose the Victualler was contractually bound to subsidise the Navy, as two successive Victuallers discovered to their cost.

Both Sir Sampson Darrell (1630-5) and John Crane (1636-42) fell victim to disastrous harvests. W.G. Hoskins has calculated that in 1630 the normal harvest yield fell nearly forty-eight per cent, which led to dearth throughout England.³⁶ In January 1631 Darrell, comprehending the impending disaster to his finances, vainly petitioned for an increase in the victualling rate. His costs had already risen by twopence per day per man over and above the rate paid by the King, and he pleaded that he should not be ruined 'by any Strictnes of Bargaine'.³⁷ Two months later he stated that he had spent twenty per cent more than he had received, an estimate which did not include the interest on money he had been forced to borrow.³⁸ Yet although he reminded the Council of his contractual right to withdraw, Darrell never seriously sought to quit.

Darrell's decision to soldier on despite heavy losses contrasts with Crane's response to the deficient harvest of 1637. In March 1638 he tendered his notice, calculating that if he was obliged to victual the fourth Ship Money fleet at the contracted rate he was staring in the

35 P.R.O., SP14/11 fos.16-7, (Apsley's & Darrell's contract, 1623); Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A216 (Crane's contract, 1637), p.199.

36 W.G. Hoskins, 'Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History, 1620-1759', *Agricultural History Review*, xvi (1968), 20,28.

37 P.R.O., SP16/183/7, Darrell to Privy Council, received 22 January.

38 Burlington House, Society of Antiquaries' MS. 203 fo.138, n.d., [Darrell to Cottingham].

face a loss of more than £100 for every hundred men set out over six months.³⁹ Yet Crane failed to relinquish his post, even though he must have shouldered a loss of around £4,500 that summer. His decision to stay, like Darrell's, may indicate a sense of duty, or it may suggest an appreciation of the fact that, just as market prices might ruin a Victualler, so too they might also compensate him for his losses and make him a healthy profit. Indeed, prior to the disastrous harvest of 1637 Crane apparently enjoyed the benefit of low market prices, for in March 1637 the Lord Treasurer decided to invite applications for a fresh contract at lower rates.⁴⁰ If a Victualler was prepared to make a profit from his contract he had also to risk making a loss, and it is scarcely surprising that the Crown refused to bail out either Darrell or Crane.

Unlike the Victualler the Navy's Treasurer was not a contractor, but even more than the Victualler he was expected to make his personal fortune available to the Navy. For the Treasurer was the Navy's banker as well as its ultimate paymaster and accountant. He was obliged to loan money to the Navy and his financial risk was limited only by the demands made on his purse, the extent of his credit and the Exchequer's ability to repay him. It was therefore important to recruit a wealthy man for the job. The Navy found the ideal man in the London merchant, Sir William Russell. In April 1625 Russell advanced £34,260 to help pay for the preparations for the Cadiz expedition 'wthilthout receaving any money at all out of ofulr Receipt of Excheq^{ue}l^r for that service'.⁴¹ Eight years later he agreed to lend the Navy £30,894 'so that both his

39 P.R.O., SP16/385/23,50, Crane to Admiralty & Juxon respectively, 4/9 March 1638.

40 P.R.O., T56/3, p.194, 6 March 1637, Juxon to Crane; P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.487.

41 P.R.O., E403/2605, p.7, 9 April 1625, (Privy Seal).

Ma[jes]t[ie] shalbe from henceforth discharged & theyr Lo[r]dshilps [the Admiralty Commissioners] freed from all trouble or importunitie'.⁴² Between October 1636 and June 1638 he loaned almost £50,000 to the Navy, nearly half of which was borrowed from Sir Paul Pindar and other City financiers.⁴³ Transactions of such magnitude necessarily placed Russell's own fortune at risk. During the Spanish war he felt the pinch as early as July 1625. He was 'already too deeply ingadged', he warned Coke, and 'yf I cann gett fairly off this tyme I shall bee well advized hereafter how I come in'.⁴⁴ When he left office for the first time in March 1627 he was owed more than £16,576.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Russell's willingness and ability to shoulder large financial burdens contrasts with Sir Sackville Crowe. Crowe was Treasurer between March 1627 and January 1630, yet his sole qualification for the job was that he had been Buckingham's accountant.⁴⁶ He never advanced a single penny to the Navy, which explains why Russell continued to negotiate loans and advance the King substantial sums while he was out of office.⁴⁷ In 1629 Russell even mortgaged the Cambridgeshire estate he had bought in 1622

42 P.R.O., SP16/228 fos.46-7, 4 May 1633, Admiralty record of Russell's contract of 20 April 1633. For the original contract documents, see P.R.O., SP16/237/15, & N.M.M., AND/68 fos.27-30.

43 Russell borrowed £16,000 from Pindar in Oct. 1636 to pay mariners' wages: P.R.O., SP16/334/6; P.R.O., T56/3, p.109. In 1637 he borrowed a further £10,391.19.5. to help pay for the construction of the *Sovereign* (tallies struck 10, 16 Aug. & 14 Nov. 1637: T56/4, pp.44-6; P.R.O., E405/285 fo.48; E405/287 fo.21v. This sum formed part of £24,171.1.5. borrowed from Pindar & others (T56/7, pp.128-9, 13 Jan. 1638, Juxon to Bingley). The purposes for which the rest of this money was taken up are not known, except for £1,500 which was needed to repair Woolwich dock. In June 1638 Russell borrowed £9,000 to repair the *Prince Royal* & the *Merhonour* (tally struck 5 June: T56/4, p.205; E405/285 fo.75v).

44 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64884 fo.43r-v.

45 Ashton, 'Russell and Burlamachi', p.164.

46 Lockyer, *Buckingham*, p.363.

47 Ashton, 'Russell and Burlamachi', p.165.

in order to raise funds for the Navy.⁴⁸

The Victualler's financial risk was determined by the state of the market, but the hazard to the Treasurer's fortune was dictated for the most part by royal demand. For this reason the Treasurer deserved security of repayment. In theory this should have been sufficiently provided by the Exchequer's system of assignment, whereby revenue was earmarked to a particular purpose before it had even been raised. In practice, a source of revenue might be over-assigned or its anticipated yield might be lower than expected. Consequently, when in 1630 Russell was re-granted the silk farm, he was expressly permitted to withhold money due to the Crown if his assignments failed.⁴⁹

Security of repayment was insufficient to make the Treasurer's job attractive. He was therefore also entitled to substantial remuneration. His fixed fee of £220 13s 4d, was the highest salary paid to any of the Principal Officers.⁵⁰ Interest payments, fixed by law at eight per cent, were another source of profit whenever the Treasurer loaned his own money. A more certain method of compensation, however, devised in the late sixteenth century to reward the Treasurer for the extensive use of his private purse, was a threepenny poundage on the monies he handled to

48 The manor was Stetchworth: *Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, ed. A.P.M. Wright, (London, 1978), vi. 172; P.R.O., T56/13, p.3, 22 May 1637, Juxon & Cottington to Anthony Crofts & others.

49 For his original grant, see P.R.O., C66/2348/22, 14 May 1625. For the 1630 grant, see B.R.L., Coventry Papers, Grants & Patents, DV892/95, 24 May 1630; P.R.O., C66/2544/8, 4 June 1630.

50 P.R.O., SP16/338/47, n.d.; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 70100 fo.1, naval salaries, 1640. The Treasurer also had a house at Deptford worth £50 a year. His salary has given rise to confusion. Oppenheim thought his fee was raised from £270.13.4. (£220.13.4. salary + £50 for house) to £645.13.4. in 1634 (Oppenheim, *Administration of the Royal Navy*, p.280). The error stems from P.R.O., SP16/268/64, which seems to suggest this. The extra money was probably the Treasurer's poundage.

buy stores. The only drawback of this was that it encouraged merchants to increase their prices, for they were understandably unwilling to pay indirectly for the Treasurer's poundage themselves.⁵¹ Russell's poundage usually dwarfed his fixed fee. In 1636 he calculated his annual average receipts from poundage during his first term of office (1618-27) at £362. This figure increased sharply after his return to office in 1630, not least because he renegotiated the poundage to include wages. Mean receipts between 1630 and 1634 rose to £670.⁵² The most spectacular increase occurred after the King decided to extend the Treasurer's poundage to include Ship Money. The figures for 1635 and 1637 were £1,530 and £1,708 respectively.⁵³ Although receipts declined thereafter, Russell and Vane's poundage in 1640 still amounted to £1,527.⁵⁴

The Treasurer and the Victualler were not the only officials who indirectly subsidised the Crown. Many others were forced to do so because their salaries failed to cover their expenses. Such institutionalised subsidy increasingly gave rise to protest. In 1632 Capt. Richard Fogg, who had commanded a ship in the Irish Sea in 1627-8, politely declined the command of another because 'the charge exceeds the benefite'.⁵⁵ Another official anxious to cut his losses was the Master Shipwright Henry Goddard, who announced in March 1633 that he would not inspect the King's ships unless he was paid travelling expenses.⁵⁶ He thought it unreasonable that he should shoulder the cost of travelling

51 *Jacobean Commissions*, pp.173-4,180-1,217.

52 P.R.O., SP16/337/78.

53 P.R.O., E351/2274-5, 2278-9, n.f. It was unclear as late as Dec. 1636 whether Charles would agree to include Ship Money: P.R.O., SP16/337/77, 20 Dec. 1636, Russell to Admiralty.

54 P.R.O., AO1/1705/85 fo.17v; AO1/1705/86 fo.9v.

55 P.R.O., SP16/220/56, 12 July 1632, Fogg to Nicholas.

56 P.R.O., SP16/233/30, 5 March 1633, Edisbury to Russell.

about the King's business, a view doubtless reinforced by the fact that his Exchequer fee was six years in arrears. Three separate petitions from 1631 yielded just one year's pay in 1634, and nothing more until February 1637.⁵⁷ Despite subsequent payments, Goddard was still owed six years' back-pay on the eve of the Civil War.⁵⁸

Captains' wages were often insufficient to offset their total costs.

In 1636 Capt. Thomas Kettleby complained that he and his colleagues

are no waile able to live and Maintaine themselves & the honor of his Majesties service out of that Stipend...whilch is now allowed by his Majestie...for the furnishing of the Cabbin, the Cookeroome, and necessary servants as are requisite for the honor of ye Kinge and his Commannd in a Shipp of the 1st], 2nd] or 3rd] Rate, under £100, £70, £50, his wages for 6 Monntnes [being] £84, £67.4s, £56 [respectively], Soe as the whole charge of this Expences of Dyett, Apparell, Ryding charges and Transportacon of stuff &c. must be bourne out of his owne fortunes.⁵⁹

Kettleby was not alone in his complaint. Captains were usually expected to shoulder the cost of sending despatches themselves, a policy which angered Capt. Richard Plumleigh at least.⁶⁰ The captain who was ordered to transport a foreign ambassador or to entertain foreign officials was not always to be envied. Admiral Sir Henry Palmer was put to the expense of catering for a French general, six of his captains, twenty French gentlemen, plus their retinues, for nearly four weeks in 1625. As the Frenchmen's tastes ran to wine rather than to the ship's beer, Palmer ran up a bill of £108.⁶¹ There was no guarantee that such expenses would be met by the Navy. In 1631 Kettleby was refused an allowance for the

57 P.R.O., SP16/145/94, (1631, miscaldendared June 1629); SP16/238/1; SP16/258/1; P.R.O., E403/1748 fo.43v; E403/1750, n.f., 9 Feb. 1637.

58 P.R.O., E403/1751, n.f., 28 Nov. 1637; E403/1752, n.f., 15 June 1638, 25 Jan. 1639; E403/1753, n.f., 17 Jan. 1640; E403/1754, n.f., 18 Jan. 1641.

59 P.R.O., SP16/311/56, 12 Jan. 1636.

60 P.R.O., SP16/263/39, 25 March 1634, Plumleigh to Nicholas. See also Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9294 fo.138 (Lord Savile's accounts, n.d.)

61 P.R.O., SP16/42/28, Palmer's bill of disbursements, 16 Dec. 1626.

cost of feeding the Spanish ambassador and his retinue.⁶² It was scarcely surprising, then, if a captain sought to evade his responsibilities. Captain Sir Walter Stewart avoided the expense of feeding a company of Spaniards in 1636 by ordering his ship's purser to do so instead.⁶³ Perhaps the only captain who was ever reimbursed the cost of feeding an ambassadorial *entourage* was Plumleigh, who was given £240 after transporting Lord Cottington to Spain in 1629.⁶⁴

Complaints about the inadequacy of captains' pay date back to at least the early 1620s. An attempt by Buckingham to increase the basic rate of pay from half a crown a day for the captains who had served in the Algiers expedition was blocked by the Navy Commissioners in 1622 on the grounds that it was unprecedented.⁶⁵ The Duke was more successful in raising the pay of the captains who served in the Cadiz expedition after further complaints in 1626, persuading the Privy Council to top up the wages of those who had commanded royal vessels with a gratuity of 100 marks, and fifty marks for those who had captained merchantmen.⁶⁶ This failed to satisfy the fleet's flag-captain, Sir Thomas Love, who reckoned that he was still out of pocket, the needs of his ship having 'cost me above one thousand marks'. He was so disgusted with the size of the gratuity that he would 'rather have nothing at all, though I should

62 P.R.O., SP16/204/116, Dec. 1631, 'Remembrances for Captaine Kettleby'.

63 It was only after the intercession of the Principal Officers that the purser (Barton) was eventually discharged of the cost of providing these victuals. P.R.O., SP16/365/55, 10 Aug. 1637, Officers to Admiralty; SP16/353 fo.55v; SP16/369/21, 3 Oct. 1637, Edisbury to Nicholas; P.R.O., E351/2439, n.f.

64 P.R.O., SP16/161/16, 17 Feb. 1630, Admiralty warrant. The gratuity was paid in 2 instalments of £90 & £150: P.R.O., E351/2268-9, n.f.

65 K.A.O., U269/1/ON771, 27 July 1622, Navy Commissioners to Cranfield. This was despite the fact that the idea stemmed from Coke: Brit. Libr., Add. MS.64877 fo.10r-v, 16 July 1621, Coke to Buckingham.

66 P.R.O., SP16/29/64, 3 June 1626; A.P.C. 1626, pp.65-6, 8 July 1626.

starve',⁶⁷ The introduction of a revised pay scale in 1626 was a step in the right direction,⁶⁸ Yet it was precisely this improved rate of pay which dissatisfied Kettleby.

Captains were not the only officers whose low salaries meant that they subsidised the Navy. In the 1630s the Comptroller and Surveyor frequently petitioned for a wage increase. Edisbury alleged that his receipts fell short of his annual expenses by nearly £44, a figure which took no account of the cost of keeping his family in London.⁶⁹ Inflation had seriously eroded their salaries, which were still at the level established under Henry VIII. Moreover, the perquisites traditionally allowed to their predecessors were no longer permitted. In 1638 Edisbury and Palmer claimed that without a pay rise they could not 'but foresee our Ruines, growing daily into debt'.⁷⁰

During the war years of the 1620s the private purses of individual naval officeholders provided a supplement to Exchequer funds which went beyond any normal subsidy of the Navy by its employees. The Exchequer's constant financial embarrassment meant that naval officials from the Lord High Admiral to the humblest shipwrights dipped into their pockets to augment the Crown's meagre financial resources.

Some time after Buckingham's assassination, Edward Nicholas claimed that one of the characteristics that had made the Duke an exceptional Lord Admiral had been his readiness to use his own money to fit out the

67 P.R.O., SP16/59/61, 6 April 1627, Capt. Love to Nicholas.

68 *A.P.C.* 1626, pp.248-51, 4 Sept. 1626.

69 N.M.M., REC/1/62, copy of a note by Edisbury, 1635.

70 P.R.O., SP16/381/40, 6 Feb. 1638, Edisbury & Palmer to Admiralty. Prof. Russell has suggested to me that they were the first to seek a pay rise based on inflation. See also SP16/254/15, SP16/258/27, SP16/268/65, SP16/303/77; P.R.O., SP12/237 fos.150v-151v.

fleet during wartime.⁷¹ The degree to which Buckingham emptied his purse for the Navy was disastrous to his personal finances. Nine months after the Duke's death it was calculated that the King owed his estate more than £53,000.⁷² As late as May 1632 the Exchequer still owed Buckingham's executors £17,390 1s 8d for monies expended during the preparations for the Ré expedition and the construction of ten pinnaces known as the *Lion's Whelps* in 1628.⁷³

These sums seem almost small by comparison with the Crown's indebtedness to the Victualler, Sir Allen Apsley. At his death in 1630 Apsley had expended about £100,000 more than he had received, of which perhaps £20,000 was his own money.⁷⁴ Apsley's colleagues on the Navy Commission also advanced money to the Navy, most notably Sir William Russell and Sir Robert Pye. In 1625 Russell owed Pye £3,000 which he had 'frendly lent'.⁷⁵ Two years later Pye told Buckingham that he had contributed some of his own money towards the preparations to relieve the army at Ré, money which he had intended to bequeath to his children, and he protested 'I will lay myself to pawn for your Lordship'.⁷⁶ Sir John Wolstenholme also expended his own money in the King's service. In September 1625 he was praised for having advanced £200 for victualling two merchantmen, and for having supplied Russell with greater sums.⁷⁷ The following month a fleet of eleven ships was set out 'partly by the

71 P.R.O., SP16/241/81, p.11.

72 B.R.L., Coventry Papers, Warrants, DV909/9, 18 May 1629.

73 C.S.P.D. 1631-3, 29 March 1632, p.296, warrant to pay Buckingham's administrator; P.R.O., SP16/111/5.

74 P.R.O., SP16/105/80.1, 30 May 1628, Apsley to Charles. For a more detailed discussion of Apsley's finances, see below, pp.252-3.

75 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64884 fo.43v, 15 July 1625, Russell to Coke.

76 P.R.O., SP16/79/2, 2 Sept. 1627.

77 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64884 fo.83, 3 Sept. 1625, Wolstenholme to Coke; *ibid.* fo.118v, Sept. 1625, Coke to Buckingham, (draft).

means of Sir John Wolstenholme⁷⁸. Two years later he exploited his position as a Customs Farmer by issuing letters of credit worth £300 to the customs collectors at Ipswich to help pay the costs of outfitting two warships at Harwich.⁷⁹ Wolstenholme's colleague, William Burrell, earlier reported that he too had spent £220 of his own money in the same business, and 'lyeth at stake for the assistance hee hath given'.⁸⁰

The readiness with which many of the Navy Commissioners extended their credit was mirrored to a lesser extent among Yard officers. When the Master Attendant William Cooke was appointed master of the *Constant Reformation* in 1626, he contributed £146 11s 6d towards the cost of victualling her crew himself.⁸¹ The Assistant Master Shipwright Edward Boate claimed in 1629 that he had 'put myself to hazard in my owne estate' by paying to provide a number of ships with sea stores, having received no money from the Exchequer.⁸² However, this behaviour was not unique to the 1620s. During the First Anglo-Dutch War Chatham's Clerk of the Cheque paid for a consignment of nails himself rather than allow work on one ship to grind to a halt.⁸³

Warrant officers sometimes met the incidental costs of their job out of their own purse. The leakiness of the *Red Lion* in September 1625 obliged her gunner to pay the cost of unloading the ship's guns while the ship was repaired.⁸⁴ During the war years many of the Navy's pursers

78 P.R.O., SP63/241/145, 7 Nov. 1625, Coke to Conway.

79 Brit. Lib., Add. MS., uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C160/12), 18 Dec. 1627, Russell & Burrell to Coke.

80 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64894 fo.21v, 22 Oct. 1627, Burrell to Coke; P.R.O., SP16/82/48, 21 Oct. 1627, Coke to Nicholas.

81 P.R.O., SP16/260/112, 112.I, 28 Feb. 1634, Cooke to Admiralty. For the original order sending him to Kinsale, see SP16/25/77.

82 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64899 fo.17v, 30 April 1629, Boate to Coke.

83 P.R.O., ADM106/3538, pt.i, bundle 1652-60, 3 April 1653, Phineas Pett to Thomas Turner.

84 P.R.O., W[ar] O[ffice] 54/11, n.f., payment of £14.15s.6d.

provided victuals for their ships when Apsley proved unable to do so. The purser of the *Happy Entrance*, Miles Troughton, was owed over £231 by Apsley's estate in December 1630, while his colleague in the *Adventure*, John Jackson, was owed a little over £221.⁸⁵ Even after the war with Spain had ended, a purser might be asked to provide victuals for his ship. In 1631 the pursers of the *Convertive* and *Tenth Whelp* revictualled their ships in Spain at a cost of nearly £600.⁸⁶ A purser who lacked the means to pay for additional victuals was a positive handicap. The deputy purser of the *Maria* pinnace was described by his captain in 1627 as 'verie poore,...not able to beare his one [sic] charges, by resfoln yt the cheife purser doth share booth wages & gaynes, so yt hee must be droven [sic] to sell,...sum of our victuall'.⁸⁷ From 1628 at least, newly appointed pursers may have been required to give surety to the Victualler.⁸⁸ Apart from discouraging dishonesty, good surety provided evidence of a purser's financial health.

Ship captains were often called upon to subsidise the Navy. In peacetime they sometimes met small incidental expenses out of their own pockets. Pennington paid 28 shillings towards the impressment of trumpeters, fifers and drummers for his ship in 1631-2, for which he was reimbursed in 1633.⁸⁹ His rival, Sir Henry Mervyn, replaced some biscuits which had been ruined by rats at a cost of £35 in 1637, although he could probably ill afford to do so.⁹⁰ In 1640 the captain of the *Garland* paid 36 shillings for the delivery of ballast to his ship.⁹¹

85 P.R.O., SP16/176/53, list of Apsley's creditors, 10 Dec. 1630.

86 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649B fo.228v, payments to W. Thomas & P. Ray.

87 P.R.O., SP16/52/6, 30 Jan. 1627, Capt. Burley to Nicholas.

88 P.R.O., SP16/98/92, 31 March 1628, Apsley to Nicholas.

89 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1655 fo.91.

90 P.R.O., E351/2280, n.f. On Mervyn's finances, see below, pp.156-8.

91 Brit. Libr., Sloane MS. 2682 (Capt. Fogg's rough letter book), fo.50.

During the war years of the 1620s captains subsidised the Navy more frequently and on a greater scale. The miscellaneous expenses incurred by Capt. John Mennes of the *Adventure* in 1628-9 were probably typical. In December 1628 he paid £10 for his ship to be piloted between Heligoland and Glückstadt, while the following March he disbursed another £5 for the cost of a pilot to guide his ship to and from Dunkirk.⁹² In September 1629 he offered to pay for his ship to be graved.⁹³ Finally, in October he replaced two weeks worth of mouldy bread aboard his ship at his own cost.⁹⁴ Mennes' predecessor as captain of the *Adventure*, George Alleyne, submitted a list of disbursements to Buckingham which included the travelling charges he had incurred in running messages to Hamburg and to the Danish King, and also the cost of feeding 150 of Henrietta Maria's servants. Alleyne's bill suggests that he was owed more than £328.⁹⁵

Admiral Sir John Watts also subsidised the Navy. In November 1626 he complained that he had been 'forced to laye out my owne small stocke to hire barkes, boats and laborers' to land his ship's victuals.⁹⁶ A few weeks later he provided 'necessaries that concernes the ship's hull' at his own expense.⁹⁷ When in February 1627 he submitted his bill of disbursements it was for no less than £123 11s.⁹⁸ Yet this was small

certificate of 10 July 1640.

92 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.106, 9 Jan. 1629, Mennes to Principal Officers; P.R.O., SP16/135/2, received 2 Feb. 1629, Mennes to Nicholas; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649A fo.148v, payments of 14 Dec. 1628 & 26 May 1629.

93 P.R.O., SP16/149/87, 24 Sept. 1629, Mennes to Nicholas.

94 P.R.O., SP16/150/32, 6 Oct. 1629, Mennes to Nicholas.

95 P.R.O., SP16/88/65-6, n.d., monies disbursed by Alleyne.

96 P.R.O., SP16/39/46, 10 Nov. 1626, Watts to Buckingham.

97 P.R.O., SP16/40/32, 27 Nov. 1626, Watts to Buckingham.

98 P.R.O., SP16/50/65, 21 Jan. 1627; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.5, 15 Feb. 1627.

change compared with the £500 laid out by Capt. John Mason in 1626 towards the cost of victualling the *Constant Reformation*. Her master, William Cooke, also provided funds, as did a Kinsale provisioner. These efforts enabled the ship to leave Ireland, where she had anchored after her return from Cadiz.⁹⁹ However, this was not the full extent to which Mason employed his credit. As Paymaster to the armies raised in 1627-8 he also provided military supplies out of his own purse, and in 1630 the government acknowledged that it owed him £8,600.¹⁰⁰

The private funds of naval officials helped to boost the government's finances during the war years. Buckingham and Russell provided nearly £70,000 of their own money for the Cadiz expedition, a substantial fraction of the final cost of about £500,000.¹⁰¹ However, private money could only make up a shortfall, it could not supplant the Exchequer. When Pennington and the assistant victualler John Clifton disbursed £2,500 of their own money in furnishing a squadron at Plymouth in 1626, they were throwing good money after bad.¹⁰² So too was Buckingham when he contributed £5,000 towards the cost of mounting a force to relieve his army at Ré in the summer and autumn of 1627.¹⁰³

Captains who spent their own money on the Navy diminished their

99 P.R.O., E351/2264, n.f. (Mason); *A.P.C. 1627*, pp.119-20 (the provisioner). For Cooke, see above, p.140.

100 P.R.O., S03/11, n.f., July 1630, award of *St. Anne* prize to Mason in part payment. See also P.R.O., E401/2448, n.f., 3 Aug. 1630.

101 On Russell, see above, pp.132-3. Buckingham provided £35,400 to help provision the fleet, of which £10,000 at least was borrowed. See P.R.O., E351/2425, n.f.; P.R.O., E403/2605 pp.202,348; P.R.O., E404/234, n.f., 9 May 1628, Marlborough & Weston to Pye. On the cost of the Cadiz expedition, see P.R.O., SP16/196/32, 7 July 1631, Capt. Mason to Dorchester.

102 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64888 fo.83r-v, 12 April 1626, Pennington to Coke.

103 P.R.O., SP16/79/2, 21 Sept. 1627, Pye to Buckingham. See also Fairfax MSS., Duchess of Buckingham papers, 4 Sept. 1627, Duchess of Buckingham to [William] Bold.

financial stock but increased their reputation. One writer exhorted them to 'spend their own meanes at sea' as their Elizabethan forbears had supposedly done in order to obtain 'honor to the kingdome and themselves'.¹⁰⁴ The notion that an officer's purse might save him from personal dishonour was one with which Pennington at least was familiar. Writing in 1629 to the Earl of Pembroke he explained that, although he was likely to suffer financially, 'yet I would not willingly suffer in my reputacon by an unprofitable consumption of my tyme in a harbor when our Coast is dayly infested by enemies'.¹⁰⁵

Reputation was not the only consideration which might persuade an officer to loosen his purse strings for the Navy. Vested interest undoubtedly explains why Buckingham did so. Moral pressure brought to bear by Buckingham, Pennington and Phineas Pett, prompted the shipwright John Taylor to fork out £280 of his own money in 1628, an act which allegedly 'streyned his estate and freindes'.¹⁰⁶ Political loyalty is probably the key to explaining why Apsley allowed himself to be bankrupted. He had been the Navy's Victualler before Buckingham's rise to prominence, but he owed his most recent position as Lieutenant of the Tower to the Duke, to whom he was related by marriage.¹⁰⁷ If Apsley had a political debt to repay, the same is also true of the Plymouth victualler Sir James Bagg, who during the war years laid out considerable sums for the Navy. Yet Bagg's willingness to do this was also, paradoxically, a symptom of self-interest, for by emptying his own purse he may have hoped to reap the rewards of gratitude. In order to

104 Longleat, Coventry MS. vol. 117 fo.32v (anon. tract, 1628/9).

105 P.R.O., SP16/147/2, 15 July 1629.

106 P.R.O., SP16/145/43, n.d., Taylor to the King. Charles' response is dated 24 June 1628.

107 Lockyer, *Buckingham*, p.39; *C.S.P.D. 1611-18*, pp.441,449.

understand this paradox, we need to examine Bagg's career.

In the early 1620s Bagg was an obscure figure, whose principal job as Vice-Admiral of South Cornwall entailed little more than gathering the Lord Admiral's share of the proceeds in the local Admiralty Court.¹⁰⁸ However, he was not content to remain in the political background. In 1623 he made direct overtures to Buckingham, who was then in Spain with Prince Charles, offering to provide victuals for the Earl of Rutland, the commander of the fleet which was to be sent to fetch Buckingham and the Prince. 'Yf your honor please to Commannd ofte that waye, or to esteeme me as your servant in this place', he wrote, 'I shall by the p[er]formance of your Com[m]ands give a true testimony'.¹⁰⁹ The willingness with which this gesture of service was received delighted Bagg, who reciprocated the favour by baking some meats 'for the duke my m[as]ter'.¹¹⁰

It was not until the preparations for war with Spain in 1625 that Bagg was afforded the opportunity to serve Buckingham on a grand scale. He was well able to do so, for his father was a successful Plymouth merchant whose estate he inherited in March.¹¹¹ That month he was engaged in preparing for the fleet victuals worth £10,000 at Plymouth, apparently on the Duke's orders.¹¹² Over the next four years he continued to provide large quantities of victuals for the Navy, and to press mariners for its ships. The Exchequer's inability to meet the cost of successive expeditions unaided necessarily placed an immense strain

108 He was also comptroller of the customs at Plymouth & Fowey: *C.S.P.D.* 1611-18, p.235.

109 P.R.O., SP14/147/3, 17 June 1623.

110 P.R.O., SP14/147/83, 28 June 1623, Bagg to Coke.

111 P.R.O., PROB11/145 fos.252v-253.

112 P.R.O., SP14/185/89, 21 March 1625, Bagg to Buckingham.

on Bagg's financial resources. In 1630 he reckoned to have disbursed more than £51,609, of which he was still owed more than £26,491.¹¹³ This figure may not have been precise, but Bagg's expenditure was so heavy that he was brought to the brink of bankruptcy in January 1628.¹¹⁴

Buckingham's assassination meant that Bagg never reaped his full reward. Nevertheless, he was compensated with a dominant local position. A knighthood in September 1625 was followed by the reversion to the captaincy of Plymouth Fort and St. Nicholas Isle in February 1626.¹¹⁵ In November 1626 he and Sir John Drake jointly replaced Buckingham's disaffected ally Sir John Eliot as Vice-Admiral of Devon, while the following month Bagg and his servant, Abraham Bigges, were granted the collectorship of the customs duties known as Impositions in several ports.¹¹⁶ It was not only in maritime affairs that Bagg's influence grew. The *rapprochement* in July 1626 between Buckingham and his main political adversary, the Earl of Pembroke, persuaded Pembroke to surrender much of his local influence in Cornwall to Buckingham's supporters. Bagg did not benefit directly, but his allies were soon installed in the Lieutenancy and in the Stannaries.¹¹⁷

Those in the Navy who spent their own money in the King's service were doing no more than was expected of them. Wealth was commonly regarded as a prerequisite for office or a commission. Sir John Coke's image of an ideal captain, expressed during Elizabeth's reign, excluded those who were 'not of abilitie in land or living, or at least can put in

113 P.R.O., SP16/172/109, 31 Aug. 1630, Charles I to Exchequer.

114 See below, ch.6.

115 Shaw, II. 189; P.R.O., S03/8, n.f.

116 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.183v; P.R.O., S03/8, n.f.

117 Richard Cust *The Forced Loan and English Politics, 1626-1628*, (Oxford, 1987), pp.202-3.

sufficient suerties as the Trefasurelr and officers of the navie shall lyke'.¹¹⁸ Sir Francis Sydenham, whose naval career covered the years 1625-33, was perhaps the epitome of the type. At his death in 1638 he was owed £200 in back-pay, yet he remained moderately well-to-do, bequeathing nearly £400 in cash to relatives and a staff comprising two manservants, two maids and a coachman.¹¹⁹

However, it is doubtful whether the majority of naval captains really were monied. In 1637 an anonymous writer alleged that, although the Navy invariably employed gentlemen captains, 'scarce any of them have meanes to live out of this service'.¹²⁰ Captain Thomas Kettleby was evidently so impoverished in 1625 that he borrowed £2 4s 4d from his ship's purser.¹²¹ Financial embarrassment also afflicted Capt. Chudleigh, who in 1627 was forced to borrow money 'to furnish myselfe for this voyage, whilch otherwise I neede not have done'.¹²² Yet it was to the Navy's credit that it did not debar able men from service merely on the grounds of poverty. When in 1625 Capt. Richard Gifford declined a commission on the grounds that he had lost too much money through unsuccessful privateering, the offer was not renewed that year.¹²³ However, the following summer he was asked again, Buckingham ordering that he be advanced £100 of his pay 'to thend that he may furnish himselfe the better'.¹²⁴ Although Gifford subsequently relinquished his command, this was due to his growing influence on Buckingham rather than to

118 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., C87/19), n.d., draft.

119 P.R.O., PROB11/176/11.

120 Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.139.

121 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9299 fo.25.

122 P.R.O., SP16/82/21, 18 Oct. 1627, Chudleigh to Nicholas.

123 P.R.O., SP16/4/77, 18 July 1625, Gifford to Buckingham.

124 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.138v.

financial misfortune.¹²⁵

It was not only captains who were often insufficiently monied to subsidise the Navy. Poverty in a member of the Navy Board, remarked John Hollond, was as serious a shortcoming as physical disability or sloth.¹²⁶ The observation was undoubtedly a pointed reference to the financial condition of Edisbury and Palmer, who in 1638 forecast their ruin unless their pay was increased. Edisbury may have exaggerated his difficulties, however, for he owned a considerable Welsh estate which assured him of a substantial rental income.¹²⁷ Moreover, from 1629 he enjoyed the office of Feodary of the Court of Wards in four Welsh counties.¹²⁸ Palmer, on the hand, may have been in serious financial trouble even before he was appointed Comptroller in 1631. Sometime before 1633 he borrowed £50 from the Chatham Chest, but he had not repaid this in April 1637.¹²⁹ The speed with which his finances collapsed has sometimes been exaggerated though. It has been said that he alienated his 600 acre estate, centering around his mansion house of Howlett near Canterbury, in 1620.¹³⁰ Yet he still occupied Howlett as late as December 1639.¹³¹ Nevertheless, in the late 1630s he evidently

125 *Ibid.*, fo.162v; McGowan, 'The Navy under Buckingham', pp.222-3. See also Andrew Thrush, 'In Pursuit of the Frigate, 1603-40', *Historical Research*, forthcoming.

126 *Hollond's Discourses*, p.86.

127 Edisbury's father had extended the family's estate of Bedwall through marriage. Kenrick acquired the estate of Pentreclawdd in 1630 & the lands of his cousin Sidney Ellis in 1633: *Dict. of Welsh Biog.*, (1959), pp.178-9; Clwyd R.O., D/E/513, 6 Feb. 1633, Edisbury to John Thomas. For Edisbury's land transactions in general, see *H.M.C. Report on additional papers of the Erdigg Estate, 15th-20th Centuries*, (unpublished, London, 1979), *passim*.

128 *H.M.C. Erdigg Report*, p.146.

129 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9301 fo.161v.

130 Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, (2nd edn, 12 vols., Canterbury, 1797-1801), ix. 271. The putative buyer was Sir Charles Hales.

131 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.353. I have been unable to discover

feared that his property might be seized, for in April 1638 he sought to transfer its nominal ownership to men he could trust while retaining actual possession for himself.¹³² However, this legal device was not enough to stave off the serious decline in his family fortunes. When, in February 1642, his son, the younger Henry Palmer, was knighted, one commentator observed that, while this had done the young man honour it had 'done his estate none, for now tis said that, laying aside his father's office, both ther land is not above 300l per annum'.¹³³

Many of those who advanced their own money or extended their credit in the King's service in the 1620s probably regretted it later, especially those who had helped finance the victualling office. In 1628 Apsley was granted land with which to pay off his debts, and on his death these were passed over to a number of trustees. Either the trustees were crooked or the value of the land was inadequate to settle the sums owed by Apsley's estate, for disputes arising from this business were still being heard in 1640.¹³⁴ Sir John Wolstenholme duly resorted to litigation to recover a debt of £340 from the victualling office in the

the MS. authority for Hasted's statement. However, fictitious land sales were a favourite device to keep the land out of wardship, as Conrad Russell has demonstrated in 'English Land Sales, 1540-1640: a Comment on the Evidence', *Economic History Review* (1972). In 1620 Palmer's eldest son would have been just nine years old.

132 P.R.O., C54/3153/24, 10 April 1638, indenture between (i) Palmer (ii) John Gould & John Kellaway (iii) John Davies & Thomas Lewis. Gould, Kellaway and Davies were naval clerks. Lewis' identity is unknown (the family lawyer?). Palmer 'conveyed' his lands to Gould & Kellaway 'to make them...to be pferlfect gennt'. Davies & Lewis were then to pursue a writ of common recovery, which would confer the land on them, after which they were to be seised of the land to Palmer's use.

133 *The Oxinden Letters, 1607-1642*, ed. Dorothy Gardiner (London, 1933), p.289, Feb. 1641/2, Henry Oxinden to Elizabeth Dallison. I am grateful to Mr. Nicholas Gould of Howletts Zoo for this reference, & for a useful correspondence.

134 P.R.O., SP16/415/19-21; SP16/418/106; SP16/432/17.

mid-1630s.¹³⁵ Thomas Clarke, who served as a deputy victualler at Ré in 1627 and at Plymouth in 1628, sought Council protection from arrest in 1630, having extended his credit to the tune of £2,200. Although he had dug deep into his own pocket, he was considered to be a creditor of Apsley's rather than a creditor of the Crown.¹³⁶ His counterpart at Portsmouth, Henry Holt, also sought Council protection from arrest, having run up a debt of £5,360 13s 10d in the King's service during the war years.¹³⁷ Holt died in 1631, but the Council still found it necessary to issue letters of protection to his son in 1639.¹³⁸ Another officer spared the rigours of a prison sentence for a debt incurred in the line of duty was Capt. Francis Hooke, who was arrested in 1631 by the fishmonger Mark Quested. This action incurred the Admiralty's displeasure, and Quested followed Edward Nicholas' advice to release Hooke and to pay the costs of his imprisonment.¹³⁹

Captains who spent their own money in the King's service during the war years risked lengthy delays at the very least in obtaining repayment. In the summer of 1628 Pennington expended £608 19s in providing supplies for the Earl of Lindsey, but it was not until the following spring that he obtained a Privy Seal. Although he was paid £400 three weeks later, the residue of more than £208 was not paid until

135 P.R.O., E125/16 fos.325r-v; E125/17 fos.47-8. I have been unable to discover the outcome of the case.

136 P.R.O., SP16/179/45-6; *C.S.P.D.* 1634-5, pp.580-1.

137 *A.P.C. 1630-1*, p.154. In Nov. 1628 Holt was so desperate to be repaid that he offered to repair the Portsmouth brewhouse at his own cost in return for payment: P.R.O., SP16/120/71. For further details on Clarke & Holt, see below, pp.262-3.

138 P.R.O., PROB11/164 fos.109-11; B.R.L., Coventry Papers, Protections 1625-33, DV904/312; P.R.O., SP16/184/64, SP16/420/124; P.R.O., S03/11, n.f., April 1635, May 1636, May 1637.

139 P.R.O., SP16/184/35, 8 Feb. 1631, Admiralty agenda; P.R.O., SP14/215 p.87, 11 Feb. 1631, Nicholas to Quested.

mid-July, 1634.¹⁴⁰ Pennington experienced a shorter wait, but was put to more trouble, when he attempted to recover £320 which he had expended in furnishing himself for a voyage to the Elbe in 1629. An initial petition to the King was referred to Lord Treasurer Portland, and then rejected because Charles forgot to furnish a written warrant. On turning to the Admiralty, Pennington was again rebuffed when they too declined to authorise payment without the King's signature. More than twelve months later, Pennington was again forced to petition the King.¹⁴¹ It was not until January 1633 that the Privy Seal Office issued a warrant, and it was another month before Pennington was finally paid.¹⁴²

Pennington was very nearly ruined by his willingness to subsidise the Navy. In 1625 he borrowed £300 against his sole land-holding worth £150 a year to enable him to pay his expenses while he served as admiral of eight ships loaned to the French.¹⁴³ Buckingham was understandably anxious to reimburse him in full, ordering that he be paid at the rate of £3 a day rather than the thirty shillings which was usually allowed to admirals of Pennington's social standing.¹⁴⁴ Shortly afterwards Pennington was given the command of another squadron, which was used to blockade Dunkirk. Once more Pennington's expenses warranted reimbursement at an increased rate, so in January 1626 Buckingham again ordered his pay to be doubled.¹⁴⁵ However, the Navy Commissioners refused to

140 P.R.O., S03/9, n.f., May 1629; P.R.O., E403/1741, n.f., payment, 8 June 1629; E403/1748, Book 71, fo.109.

141 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C102/9), n.d., but summer or autumn 1630.

142 P.R.O., IND1/6748 (warrants to the Privy Seal), n.f., 5 Jan. 1633; P.R.O., E403/2567 (Privy Seal book), fo.10v; P.R.O., E403/1746, n.f., payment, 7 Feb. 1633.

143 P.R.O., SP16/24/9, 2 April 1626, Pennington to Nicholas.

144 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 37816 fos.38r-v, 13 Aug. 1625, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners.

145 *Ibid.*, fo.53v, 7 Jan. 1626, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners.

honour either warrant, on the grounds that double-pay was unprecedented, and paid Pennington at the usual rate instead.¹⁴⁶ By April Pennington was desperate for his remaining money, fearing that his land was already lost.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, as admiral of a squadron which was then fitting out at Plymouth, he and the deputy victualler John Clifton had extended their credit to the tune of £2,500.¹⁴⁸

Only Buckingham's prompt action appears to have saved Pennington from financial disaster. Towards the end of April he ordered Sir William Russell immediately to advance Pennington £200.¹⁴⁹ The following month he recalled one of the objectionable warrants and replaced it with another which authorised payment at the standard rate.¹⁵⁰ However, at Coke's suggestion, Pennington was to be permitted an additional £217 10s in recompense for his travelling costs.¹⁵¹ It is not clear exactly when this debt was settled, but the Navy Treasurer's account for 1626 shows that Pennington received £300 over and above the going rate.¹⁵² Even if this was paid quickly though, there was still the matter of the money Pennington and Clifton had advanced for the Plymouth squadron. However, in mid-May Buckingham informed Pennington that he had obtained £2,000, and that he hoped to receive a further £1,600 shortly, with which to

146 P.R.O., SP16/20/49, 8 Feb. 1626, Isaac Pennington to John Pennington; SP16/21/85, 28 Feb. 1626, Nicholas to Pennington; SP16/22/93, 13 March 1626, Commissioners to Buckingham; SP16/22/95, 13 March 1626, Isaac to John Pennington; SP16/24/43, 6 April 1626, Isaac to John Pennington; SP16/24/65, 11 April 1626, Pennington to Buckingham.

147 P.R.O., SP16/24/9, 2 April 1626, Pennington to Nicholas.

148 See above, n.102.

149 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.96v, 26 April 1626.

150 *Ibid.*, fos.110r-v, 23 May 1626, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners. Buckingham evidently refused to cancel the warrant relating to Pennington's French service, perhaps because the French rather than the Exchequer footed the bill: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fos.130v-131, 7 July 1626, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners.

151 P.R.O., SP16/27/37, 21 May 1626, Coke to Nicholas.

152 P.R.O., E351/2264, n.f.

'redeeme yor creditt, and free yor engagements',¹⁵³ These efforts to see that Pennington was not left out of pocket were typical of the Duke. Shortly before his death he reminded Pye how indebted he was to Sir James Bagg, who had disbursed sums far greater than Pennington, and how important it was to see that he was repaid.¹⁵⁴

Yet not everyone was repaid in full. In 1631 Capt. Plumleigh protested that he was £360 out of pocket.¹⁵⁵ He subsequently secured a Privy Seal for repayment, which was misleadingly styled a 'free gift', but it was for just £300, of which only £200 was ever paid.¹⁵⁶ Plumleigh's difficulties pale into insignificance when compared with those of Christopher Harris, captain of the *Phoenix* pinnace. Between October 1624 and February 1627 Harris received £1,400 from Apsley with which to victual his ship. This was not enough, and he had to find an additional £609 from his own purse to make up the shortfall. The inability of Apsley or his executors to honour the debt meant that Harris, like Wolstenholme, had resorted to litigation by 1635.¹⁵⁷ This was evidently unsuccessful, for in 1639 he petitioned to be repaid the whole sum.¹⁵⁸ Although the Exchequer was subsequently warranted to settle the debt, the demands of the First Bishops' War appear to have taken precedence, and there is no evidence to suggest that Harris was ever paid before the Civil War.¹⁵⁹

153 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.105, 12 May 1626.

154 P.R.O., SP16/113/3, 16 Aug. 1626, Buckingham to Pye, (rough copy).

155 P.R.O., SP16/186/94, 14 March 1631, Plumleigh to Nicholas.

156 C.S.P.D. 1631-3, p.292, warrant, 23 March 1632; P.R.O., E403/1746, n.f., payment, 26 April 1632. Plumleigh even had to badger Pye once payment had been warranted; P.R.O., SP16/215/69.

157 P.R.O., SP16/60/44, 17 April 1627, Harris to Nicholas; P.R.O., E125/17 fos.8-9v; P.R.O., E125/18 fos.12v, 13v, 95v, 96. In 1630 Harris claimed he was owed £896 8s; P.R.O., SP16/176/53.

158 P.R.O., T56/14 p.167, 22 Jan. 1639, Harris to Exchequer.

159 C.S.P.D. 1638-9, p.460, 14 Feb. 1639, warrant.

At least one captain was thoroughly ruined as a consequence of his naval service. The financial disaster which befell Admiral Sir Thomas Button, who commanded the ships in the Irish Sea until 1634, resulted from a combination of Button's preparedness to subsidise his job and the Crown's failure to pay him his wages. In 1625 the Exchequer admitted that it owed Button £3,615 13s 4d for his service under Queen Elizabeth.¹⁶⁰ Although Button subsequently obtained a Privy Seal which authorised his repayment, he never received a penny during his lifetime. Instead, the outbreak of war with Spain in 1625 found him dipping into his own pocket to pay for the victuals of his ship, the *Antelope*. In 1634 Button was accused of despatching the *Antelope* to Ireland with only six weeks victuals, but he convincingly rebutted the charge.¹⁶¹ Far from making an illegal profit by short-supplying his ship, he exhausted his own resources in paying for fresh provisions, as did his deputy, Anthony Rice. In November 1625 Button complained that the ships serving off Ireland were continuously underfunded, an evil 'that hath raigned this 8 yeares', and as a result he was in such straits 'that I am utterly undone'. He also claimed to have paid £330 for the repair of Kinsale's Castle Park, for which he was also responsible, as well as the garrison's wages.¹⁶² Significantly, this assertion was believed by Coke.¹⁶³ Button might have been able to afford such sums had he been

160 P.R.O., SP14/181/14, 3 Jan. 1625, warrant to Attorney-General. The warrant was renewed shortly after the death of James I; P.R.O., S03/8, n.f., March 1625.

161 P.R.O., SP16/228 fo.119r-v, 22 Feb. 1634 (charges); SP16/263/90, n.d. (Button's answers).

162 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64885 fo.59, 17 Nov. 1625, Rice to Button; Add. MS. 64886 fo.7r-v, 2 Nov. 1625, Button to Navy Commissioners. Rice was Button's deputy because Button was also a member of the Council of War. For a discussion of the financial value of Castle Park to the Admiral on the Irish Guard, see below p.167.

163 P.R.O., SP63/241/145, 7 Nov. 1625, Coke to Conway.

paid either his wages or the pension granted him by James I, but he complained that he had received nothing, although he had a wife and seven children to support.¹⁶⁴ It was small wonder that Button wrote to Pennington in March 1626 in tones full of sympathy, 'I am sensible of yor insufferable trobles and wishe from my sowle yow might be to yor content easd of them', but he added, 'this letts yow see what yor poore freindes have suffered, thoe not in so great a p[ro]portion as nowe yow doe'.¹⁶⁵ This was the commiseration of one captain whose credit had been strained in the King's service with another in the same predicament.

By 1627 Button's finances were on the verge of collapse. In August he mortgaged most of his lands for £1,243 to two members of the Ordnance Office, Francis Morice and John Reynolds. This was to be repaid in two instalments within two years, together with interest at eight per cent.¹⁶⁶ Button presumably hoped he would be able to pay this out of the money he was owed by the Crown. However, although he was paid £100 by the Exchequer in March 1628, and another £265 the following December, he received nothing more before the deadline of 29 September 1629.¹⁶⁷ Unable to scrape together sufficient money, he pleaded with Secretary Dorchester to persuade his creditors not to foreclose.¹⁶⁸ This appeal seems to have done the trick, but Button avoided the loss of his estate by a whisker. In June 1630 he told the Admiralty that he had paid his creditors something of what he owed them, and asked for their mediation to prevent Morice and Reynolds from confiscating his lands, which were

164 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64885 fo.12v, 27 Oct. 1625, Button to Coke.

165 P.R.O., SP16/23/76, 26 March 1626.

166 Dyfyd Archives Service, Lort MS. 12/571, deed, 2 Aug 1627. The rate of interest is specified in the endorsement. I am grateful to Elizabeth Twist for answering queries about the contents of this MS.

167 P.R.O., E403/1739, n.f., 4 Mar. 1628; E403/1740, n.f., 17 Dec. 1628.

168 P.R.O., SP16/153/82, 23 Dec. 1629.

technically forfeit.¹⁶⁹ The following spring he again appealed to Dorchester for the rest of his arrears, for if these were not paid 'I shall [have] such exten[t]ts & Judgmentts com[e]d on my lands that my wiffe & children wilbe found a bigginge'.¹⁷⁰ However, a few weeks earlier his wife had been paid more than £395 of the arrears due on his pension.¹⁷¹ It was probably this money which enabled him to rescue his estate, and although in the summer of 1631 Button again petitioned to obtain some of the £2,300 he was still owed, there was no suggestion that his lands were still in danger.¹⁷² Nevertheless, Button's finances remained in a desperate condition. It was not until after his death in 1634 that a further £650 of his arrears was paid.¹⁷³ As late as the Restoration his son was still labouring under the weight of his debts.¹⁷⁴

If the Navy was responsible for ruining Sir Thomas Button and for almost inflicting the same fate on Pennington, so too it seems to have been partly to blame for the financial embarrassment of Admiral Sir Henry Mervyn. In 1628 Mervyn claimed that he was owed £1,460 for his wages as Admiral of the Narrow Seas over the last twelve years, £3,650 for the cost of his retinue, and a further £3,000 for extraordinary, but unspecified, disbursements.¹⁷⁵ The first figure at least is open to question, for Mervyn failed to mention his suspension between 1623 and 1626.¹⁷⁶ But even if he was owed only a fraction of the total sum of

169 P.R.O., SP63/250/113, 16 June 1630.

170 P.R.O., SP16/188/10, 2 April 1631.

171 P.R.O., E403/1743, n.f., payment to Elizabeth Button, 15 March 1631.

172 P.R.O., SP63/252/67, 6 June 1631, Button to Dorchester.

173 P.R.O., T56/11 fos.24v,64; T56/4 pp.30,69; P.R.O., E403/1749, n.f., payment, 8 July 1635; E403/1750, n.f., payments, 1 July 1636, 17 March 1637; E403/1751, n.f., payments, 1 Aug. 1637, 22 Dec. 1637.

174 *C.S.P.D.*, 1660-1, XXV/24, Dec.? 1660, petition of Miles & Florence Button.

175 P.R.O., SP14/139/17,32,41,73,78,102; SP14/140/6,18.

176 P.R.O., SP16/122/45, n.d., received by Admiralty 15 Dec. 1628.

£8,110, this, together with the £3,500 he allegedly spent in procuring the post in the first place, may explain why he was forever short of money.¹⁷⁷ In 1627 he was so hard up that he obtained an advance of £65 on his wages from Sir James Bagg.¹⁷⁸ Shortly afterwards he asked Nicholas for a further £50.¹⁷⁹ His poverty was so acute that for about a year after his reinstatement as Admiral of the Narrow Seas in 1626 he pursued his private affairs, to the annoyance of Buckingham, who threatened to sack him.¹⁸⁰ In November 1627 Mervyn obtained a share in some royal mines in Lancashire and Yorkshire, but whether these were profitable is unknown.¹⁸¹ By 1629 his Irish lands were under immediate threat of seizure, and the following year he seriously contemplated selling his post to Sir Kenelm Digby.¹⁸² Northumberland was so distressed at Mervyn's plight in 1637 that he sent him a hundred pieces, 'and bid him use them until he sent for them again'.¹⁸³

Mervyn's poverty may have been partly self-inflicted. In 1640 his three daughters described him as a wastrel, who had frittered away his wife's lands worth £40,000.¹⁸⁴ On the other hand, Mervyn believed he had been cheated out of his 'Estate & livelihood by the lewd practises of a disobedient sonne'.¹⁸⁵ Whatever the truth of these claims, Mervyn's

177 P.R.O., SP16/6/134, n.d., petition by Mervyn.

178 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A210 fo.13.

179 P.R.O., SP16/87/37.

180 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fos.76v-7, 29 April 1627, Buckingham to Mervyn.

181 B.R.L., Coventry Papers, Grants & Patents, DV892/33, 17 Nov. 1627. The grant appears not to have passed immediately; P.R.O., SP16/90/40, 8 Jan. 1628, Mervyn to Nicholas.

182 On his Irish estate, see *C.S.P.I.* 1625-33, pp.493-4, 8 Nov. 1629, Rives to Mervyn. On Digby, see P.R.O., SP16/173/6, 4 Sept. 1630, Mervyn to Nicholas. In Dec. 1629 Mervyn sought leave to settle his private affairs; SP16/153/90.

183 *Strafforde's Letters*, i, 524.

184 *C.S.P.D.* 1640, p.287, petition to the King, 11 June 1640.

185 P.R.O., SP16/14/73, n.d.

poverty was at the very least exacerbated by his naval service. Despite the fact that he was superseded by Pennington as Admiral of the Narrow Seas, he received so-called imprests on his wages in the 1630s totalling £1,500.¹⁸⁶ This was really a cynical way of paying Mervyn some of the money he was owed without acknowledging the full extent of the debt.

Captains who proved unable to recover by legitimate means the money they had advanced were likely to be tempted to use illegitimate methods instead. Captain Chudleigh, who had paid to victual his pinnace at Dartmouth in 1624, evidently expected to be congratulated for having resisted the urge to embezzle the cargo of a prize ship.¹⁸⁷ Chudleigh explained that he put his reputation above private profit, but not all captains could afford to be so scrupulous. Buckingham told Lord Deputy Falkland in 1626 that Christopher Harris was using his vessel to catch fish instead of guarding the Irish Sea.¹⁸⁸ Perhaps Harris was so out of pocket that this was the only way he and his men could avoid starvation, but he may simply have been endeavouring to recoup some of his losses. It is perhaps in the same context that the illegal conveyance of merchant goods in the holds of their ships by Plumleigh and Mennes in 1629 should be understood.¹⁸⁹ No such mitigating circumstances will explain the misconduct of Capt. Bamford of the *Fourth Whelp*, however,

186 £500 was imprested to Mervyn in March 1630; P.R.O., SP16/179/36; P.R.O., E351/2269, n.f. A further £500 was ordered to be paid in Nov. 1631, & was completely issued by July 1632; P.R.O., S03/10, n.f., Nov. 1631; P.R.O., E403/1745, n.f., 23 Dec. 1631, 2 March 1632; E403/1746, n.f., 22 June & 6 July 1632. The final £500 was ordered to be paid in June 1634; SP16/270/27; E403/2567 fo.70. For payments, see E403/1748 Book 71 fo.134; *ibid.*, Book 72 fo.92; E403/1749, n.f., 18 Nov. 1635; P.R.O., T34/5 fo.18v.

187 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64881 fo.14, 12 Jan. 1624, Chudleigh to Coke; *ibid.*, fo.119, 25 June 1624, Chudleigh to Coke.

188 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 37816 fo.187, 22 Nov. 1626.

189 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C149/13), n.d., notes by Coke.

who used his ship to carry on a smuggling operation between Flushing and the Thames.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, Plumleigh and Mennes appear not to have let their illicit trafficking interfere with their duties, but Bamford frequently absented himself from his ship.¹⁹¹ All this explains why Bamford spent more than four months in custody and why he was not employed by the Navy for nearly three years thereafter, whereas Plumleigh and Mennes got off scot free.¹⁹²

The most striking example of an officer who seems to have resorted to theft to recover money he had expended in the King's service was Sir Thomas Button. At about the time that his lands were due to be seized, Button purloined part of the salt cargo of the *St. John* of Dunkirk, a prize ship which he had captured.¹⁹³ He steadfastly refused to confess his offence, but Coke's notes on the matter suggest that Button took salt worth up to £310.¹⁹⁴ The tragedy of the affair is that it not only brought Button into disrepute, it also did little to prop up his sagging finances. Unable to provide victuals in either the quantity or quality demanded for the two ships under his command, Button failed to prevent the corsair raid on the Irish town of Baltimore in 1631.

It is tempting to describe Button as incurably corrupt. He was among the most culpable of those officers investigated by the commission of

190 P.R.O., SP16/151/33, 7 Nov. 1629, memo. by Coke.

191 P.R.O., SP16/151/75, 15 Nov. 1629, Mervyn to Nicholas.

192 P.R.O., SP16/152/60, 29 Nov. 1629, Mervyn to Nicholas. For Bamford's arrest & imprisonment, see SP16/156 fos.33,35; P.R.O., SP14/215, p.87. He was refused further employment in 1630 (SP16/176/67, SP16/177/20), & was only readmitted in 1634 after Pennington's intercession (SP16/475 fo.331v; *C.S.P.D.* 1633-4, p.501).

193 P.R.O., SP16/186/84, 12 March 1631, Button's examination. On the preliminary investigation into the disappearance of the salt, see SP16/173/8,85; SP16/174/28,60; SP16/175/117; SP16/176/15.

194 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C146/24), 13 March 1631.

enquiry into the Navy in 1608-9.¹⁹⁵ Yet even then Button may have been motivated less by the desire to line his pockets than by the need to claw back money he was owed. In 1606 the purser of the *Answer* reported to the then Surveyor, Sir John Trevor, that Button was fiddling the muster book of his ship in order to claim the wages of non-existent crewmen. Trevor allegedly replied that he was

not willing to check those proceedings, but rather content to give allowance of them, saying that it might be that his cousin Button, for a time till he had received his loss at the sea, would peradventure be a little gripple, but afterwards he doubted not that he would prove a royal gentleman.¹⁹⁶

It was Button's misfortune that there were not those in the Navy's administration who were similarly prepared to acquiesce in such behaviour twenty years later.

If Button's poverty ultimately led to the Baltimore disaster, so too it directly contributed to the financial plight of his fellow captain, Francis Hooke. In 1631 Hooke, who commanded the *Fifth Whelp*, complained that he had been imprisoned by Mark Quested for failing to pay for victuals. Hooke pleaded that he was unable to pay Quested because Button owed him £14 for victualling his ship and a further £10 for buying a topmast and graving his ship.¹⁹⁷ In addition, Hooke had not been paid for five months. In an earlier attempt to solve his financial problems, Hooke was driven to pure mimicry, for in July 1630 he apparently sold the contents of a small vessel he had recovered from pirates.¹⁹⁸

Button's fate demonstrates that the government was not prepared to tolerate compensatory theft. So does the treatment meted out to the

195 *Commissions of Enquiry*, pp.59-63.

196 *Ibid.*, p.62.

197 P.R.O., SP16/184/36, 8 Feb, 1631, Hooke to Nicholas.

198 P.R.O., SP16/177/34, note received by Admiralty, 21 Dec, 1630.

Comptroller and Surveyor, whose claim that they were forced to subsidise the Navy because their pay was too small was consistently ignored. In 1639 they and the Clerk of the Navy were accused of having fiddled their expenses to the tune of £1,984 a year. Although they were henceforth to share an additional £300 a year between them, this was not not a genuine pay rise, for it was granted in lieu of travelling costs and the upkeep of the Navy Office.¹⁹⁹

An element of 'compensation' may help to explain an affair which plunged Admiral Sir Henry Palmer into temporary disgrace in 1629, when he and his two subordinates, Capt. John Dymes and Capt. Sidrack Gibbon, were accused of plundering prizes and robbing Dutch merchantmen. Palmer implicated Gibbon, who he said had admitted to having received £32 in stolen coin.²⁰⁰ Gibbon had commanded a privateer the previous year, and it may be that he had not yet lost the urge to plunder.²⁰¹ In 1630 he displayed a distinctly mercenary attitude when, as captain of the *Tenth Whelp*, he asked for a prize ship on the grounds that he had never received a gratuity.²⁰² The culpability of Dymes is an open question, but if he did line his pockets he was to be forced to dip into them again a few months later. In September 1629 Mervyn reported that Dymes' credit was 'at the farthest stretch' in providing victuals for his

199 Alnwick Castle MSS., vol.14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.266, Principal Officers to [Northumberland], n.d., endorsed 1639; C.S.P.D. 1638-9, p.592, docquet, 22 March 1639; P.R.O. S03/12, n.f., March 1639. Monson commented on the Officers' extravagant travelling arrangements in 1635: *Monson's Tracts*, iv, 142.

200 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C148/39), Palmer's examination, n.d.; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64900 fos.38-9, n.d., Palmer's answer to the charges; P.R.O., SP16/142/62, 11 May 1629, Palmer to Admiralty. I have been unable to discover any evidence of a formal prosecution in the Admiralty Court.

201 P.R.O., HCA14/44, pt.i, fo.59, 29 April 1628, Buckingham to Mayor of Bristol.

202 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64901 fo.11, 21 July 1630, Gibbon to Weston.

mutinous crew,²⁰³ However, Palmer's case is the most intriguing. He denied complicity in any theft, yet in 1628 his ship's boatswain reported that Palmer had sold a captured fishing boat for £15,²⁰⁴ But then, as later, there may have been mitigating circumstances. As the acting Admiral of the Narrow Seas in 1625-6, Palmer had laid out £141 on his own account,²⁰⁵ By July 1627 he had succeeded in getting this sum placed in an estimate, but there is no evidence to suggest that he was actually paid.²⁰⁶ Thus, Palmer may have adopted the methods of Sir Thomas Button to recover his loss.

During the war years, warrant officers were as likely to compensate themselves for their losses by peculation as their superiors. In 1627 the purser of the *St. Claude* complained that he was £60 out of pocket, having helped to victual his ship.²⁰⁷ Ten months later Secretary Coke noted that Clarke had refused to submit his muster book to the Clerk of the Cheque, which would have allowed the ship to have been victualled according to her precise complement. Consequently, although the ship 'had not 30 men aboard yet the purser will bee allowed for 80', Naval gunners were not averse to using similar tactics.²⁰⁸ Before April 1635 it was common for gunners to solicit for their stores in London to hasten their delivery. However, those who did were likely to find themselves out of pocket, since the cost of their board and lodgings was

203 P.R.O., SP16/149/90, 20 Sept. 1629, Mervyn to Admiralty.

204 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64897 fo.47, 30 July 1628, Thomas Cooke to Edisbury.

205 P.R.O., SP16/42/28, bill of disbursements; SP16/27/4, 15 May 1626, Palmer to Nicholas; SP16/40/48, 30 Nov. 1626, Palmer to Nicholas.

206 P.R.O., SP16/71/31, 17 July 1627, Palmer to Nicholas. There is no record of payment on the Navy Treasurer's accounts for 1627-8; P.R.O., E351/2265-6.

207 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64893 fo.1, 23 Aug. 1627, Burrell to Coke.

208 P.R.O., SP16/106 fo.78v, (Coke's journal).

not met by the Navy or the Ordnance Office. Thus in 1625 Downing was told by one gunner that he would sell a barrel of powder to recompense himself for the costs he had incurred.²⁰⁹ One man who did get an allowance was the gunner Robert Chamberlain, who in 1631 was paid £3 15s by the Ordnance Office after transporting his personal effects from Chatham to Portsmouth.²¹⁰ As Chamberlain was a relative of Francis Morice, the Clerk of the Ordnance, the payment suggests the importance of being well connected.²¹¹

The extent to which many naval officials subsidised their posts begs some difficult questions. Why did anyone take office in the Navy, if its tenure entailed a drain on the official's own purse? Some answers to this question have already been offered. The Victualler who subsidised his job did so because this was part of the financial risk he took; the Treasurer loaned money to the Navy because it was lucrative to do so; others were motivated by political loyalty, ambition, vested interest, or a concern for their reputation. Yet this picture is ultimately distorted. Unlike most senior administrators, admirals and ship captains, many minor officials seldom, if ever, dipped into their own pockets for the Navy. Instead, they regarded office first and foremost as a financial proposition, or at the very least, as a way of making a living. It is to this theme that we must now turn.

III. Private Profit

Officials who resorted to corruption were not all attempting to

209 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.1, 29 March 1625, Downing to Coke.

210 P.R.O., E407/13, Ordnance Office Quarter book, April-June 1631, n.f.

211 P.R.O., SP16/106/75, 9 June 1628, Morice to Nicholas. The Lieutenant of the Ordnance criticised the payment: SP16/214/28.

compensate themselves for losses incurred in the King's service. Many offices were attractive because they afforded access to illegitimate profits, a fact reflected in the price at which they changed hands. In the late 1620s the going rate for purserships was said to be £140 or £150.²¹² As pursers were paid between 23s 4d and 40s a month, this sort of outlay could only be recompensed by theft. Purserships were not the only lucrative positions. In 1632 one Phineas Eddy paid Portsmouth's Clerk of the Cheque £42 in cash, and gave him a carpet and cushions worth a further £6, in the hope of becoming cook of the *Triumph*. One observer thought this was excessive,²¹³ and indeed the size of the gratuity was equivalent to more than three years' salary. However, even in a ship smaller than the *Triumph*, a cook at sea for eight months could extract tallow from meat worth between £20 and £25.²¹⁴

The gunner's equivalent of tallow was 'scaling' powder. This was the powder contained in the guns of the ships on their return from sea. In 1637 the gunner of the *Unicorn*, Henry Young, was questioned for having sold three barrels of scaling powder for £7 10s.²¹⁵ This tidy sum was equivalent to around two-fifths of Young's official salary. Gunners stand out as a particularly acquisitive lot. In 1624 the gunner of the *Antelope*, George Pitcher, was arrested for allegedly selling 1½ barrels of powder. He was subsequently released, but only because he was needed to serve aboard his ship.²¹⁶ Twelve years later he was again in trouble,

212 Longleat, Coventry Papers, vol.117 fo.38.

213 P.R.O., SP16/296/3, 1 April 1635, Hollond to Nicholas.

214 Longleat, Coventry Papers, vol.117 fo.36.

215 Bodl. Libr., MS. Bankes 63/24-6, examinations of Young, William Cobham & John Lorymore, 8 May 1637. I am grateful to Prof. Linda Levy Peck for this reference.

216 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb., R.O., Coke MS. C160/26), notes by Coke, 1624.

this time for allegedly embezzling stores earmarked for the *Triumph*.²¹⁷ It may be significant in this context that, at his death in 1638, Pitcher was wealthy enough to bequeath several acres of land in north Kent, a small quantity of silverware, and a modest amount of cash.²¹⁸ Pitcher's colleague in the *Tenth Whelp*, Rice Thomas, was also twice arraigned for stealing powder.²¹⁹ Both men's activities pale by comparison with the malfeasance imputed to the gunner of the *Merhonour* in 1635, who was charged with embezzling twenty-three barrels of powder, and was able to account for just three.²²⁰

Some offices were attractive because of the semi-official emoluments which went with them. The Admiralty Secretary enjoyed an income largely incremental to his annual salary of £200. This comprised the gratuities paid by those eager to enlist his support in their search for office. Such gratuities were not necessarily confined to money payments. In 1628 the captain of the Thames guardship plied Edward Nicholas with fresh seafood in an attempt to obtain the pursership of the *Triumph* for his son-in-law.²²¹ Failure to tip the Admiralty Secretary demanded an explanation. In 1636 Edisbury apologised to Nicholas for having recommended an officer to the *St. Denis* who had 'promised much but performed nothing in thankfullness to yow for that favor'.²²² The Paymaster also derived an income which was additional to his salary. This took the form

217 P.R.O., SP16/311/32, 14 Jan. 1636, Nicholas' notes.

218 P.R.O., PROB11/177 fos.346-7.

219 P.R.O., SP16/215/82, 26 April 1632, Stradling to Coke; SP16/216/12, 4 May 1632, Principal Officers to Admiralty; SP16/218/17, 6 June 1632, Stradling to Nicholas; SP16/298/71, Capt. Smith's journal, 1635; SP16/318/9, 2 April 1636, Rice Thomas to Admiralty; P.R.O., HCA1/50, n.f., Rice Thomas' examination, 13 June 1636.

220 P.R.O., HCA1/50, n.f., examination of Robert Walsingham, 14 March 1636.

221 P.R.O., SP16/101/21, 16 April 1628, Capt. Duffell to Nicholas.

222 P.R.O., SP16/330/39, 15 Aug. 1636, Edisbury to Nicholas.

of a fee which he deducted from seamen's wages, although this was so resented that it was ordered to be abolished in 1637.²²³

As a rule the Navy's captains did badly out of their posts. However, there were times when there was an unofficial profit to be made. Traditionally, captains of ships assigned to convoy duty were the recipients of gifts from merchant vessels eager to obtain protection. Thus, when Palmer was interrogated about his alleged plundering of friendly merchantmen in 1629 he admitted to receiving a barrel of figs and a hogshead of sack, but explained that 'there are few of our owne Nation but ordinarilye doe it, though not by way of Brybe, but to gratify the Admiralls and captaines of the fleets with such Tryfles when they meet with them'.²²⁴ In the second half of the 1630s, when Spain was increasingly anxious to supply men and bullion by sea, it was possible for English naval captains to make a handsome profit. Sir Walter Stewart allegedly made £5,000 in 1636 when his ship convoyed Spanish silver to Dunkirk.²²⁵ From 1638 all convoy duties were paid to the new Lord High Admiral, who redistributed it to the fleet's captains on a percentage basis.²²⁶ In February 1638 convoy receipts from the previous year amounted to more than £1,893, although not all of this had been

223 P.R.O., SP16/133/33,67 (complaints of the Navy's chaplains, 1629); *Holland's Discourses*, pp.388,404 (complaints & abolition, 1636-7).

224 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64900 fos.38-9. See also John Pothan's examination, 1637, in *High Court of Admiralty Examinations, 1637-1638*, ed. Dorothy Shilton & Richard Holsworthy (*Anglo-American Records Foundation*, 1932), p.279.

225 P.R.O., SP16/343/82, 14 Jan. 1637, Lieut. Bardsey to the King. A. J. Loomie says that the Spanish ambassador distributed £3,000 to English naval officers in Sept. 1636 to protect a silver shipment; 'The Spanish Faction at the Court of Charles I, 1630-8', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, lix (1986), p.49, n.64.

226 P.R.O., SP16/398/113, 19 Sept. 1638, Smith to Pennington; SP16/402/29, 21 Nov. 1638, Smith to Pennington. Northumberland also shared £200 among 'some that are no captains'; SP16/404/33, 6 Dec. 1638, Smith to Pennington.

collected.²²⁷ The following June Capt. Carteret wrote to his wife that 'This imployment that I am now in is like to be resonnable beneficial unto mee'.²²⁸ Despite subsequent rumours of French naval activity, which brought trade to a temporary standstill, the convoy money collected by October may have amounted to as much as £1,500.²²⁹

A few captains were granted nominal command of a castle to supplement their incomes. Sir Thomas Love and Sir John Pennington were successively castellans of Sandown Castle, a post which carried with it an annual fee of £20.²³⁰ In 1637 Mennes was appointed captain of Walmer Castle.²³¹ The Castle and Park at Kinsale came with the job of admiral on the Irish coast. Pennington described it as 'ye best & only place ye kinge hath to gratifie his diserving sea men wthilth', but it was an odd remark in view of the fate of Sir Thomas Button, whose tenure of the castle had proved as ruinous as his naval commission.²³² Button's successor, Richard Plumleigh, was positively dismissive about the benefits to be derived from Castle Park.²³³ Not until Kettleby was appointed admiral did the post begin to look attractive. In 1638 Wentworth desired to grant him land in Munster to encourage him to settle in Ireland.²³⁴ The establishment of a permanent naval base at Kinsale in the late 1630s, and a long-standing complaint that the captains on the Irish service

227 P.R.O., SP16/413/13, 16 Feb. 1639, convoy money account.

228 P.R.O., SP16/418/92, 30 April 1639.

229 P.R.O., SP16/421/142, 23 May 1639, Smith to Pennington; SP16/423/18, 3 June 1639, Carteret to Pennington; SP16/431/51, 23 Oct. 1639, Smith to Pennington.

230 P.R.O., S03/8, n.f., grant to Pennington, May 1627.

231 P.R.O., SP16/387/11, 2 April 1638, Nicholas Lisle's certificate.

232 P.R.O., SP16/356/67, 25 May 1637, Pennington to Nicholas.

233 P.R.O., SP63/254/122, 7 May 1634, Plumleigh to Nicholas.

234 *Strafforde's Letters*, ii, 206, 11 Aug. 1638, Wentworth to Coke; *ibid.*, 341, 18 May 1639, Wentworth to Coke.

were non-resident, had made this imperative.²³⁵

The benefits of pluralism were not restricted to the captaincy. Many of the Navy's gunners held pensions in the Tower. Most of these were worth £9 2s 6d a year, which increased the wage of a gunner of a second rate from £18 12s to £27 14s 6d.²³⁶ Peter Filcott and Thomas Taylor were gunners of first rates, and received double the normal Tower pension, so their wages which were nominally £24 a year were in fact £42 5s.²³⁷

One officer who enjoyed financial good fortune in the 1630s was Sir John Pennington. Ironically, the foundations for his wealth may have been laid in the 1620s, when the Navy's demands on his purse were acute. In 1624 he had been granted a rental income of £150 as a reward for his services.²³⁸ During the early 1630s he had great difficulty in collecting all of this because some of his Gloucestershire tenants refused to pay.²³⁹ However, in 1635 the King rid him of this problem by buying out part of his landholding for £500, while still leaving him with an annual rental income of £121 5s 5d.²⁴⁰ In addition to the land he received in 1624, Pennington benefited from his spectacular haul of French prizes in the Channel in May 1627, for he was promised a reward of £1,000.²⁴¹ Instead of receiving payment in cash, however, he was

235 On the problem of non-residence, see *C.S.P.I.*, 1625-32, p.671, 23 July 1632, Lords Justices to Privy Council. On Kinsale, see above, p.59.

236 Between 1625 & 1640 14 naval gunners held Tower pensions.

237 B.R.L., Coventry Papers, Grants, DV896/200 (Filcott); *ibid.*, DV896/315 (Taylor).

238 P.R.O., S03/8, n.f., Aug. 1624.

239 National Library of Scotland, Newbattle MS. 5741 fo.29v, 29 Sept. 1631, Pennington to Barons of the Exchequer. The Forest of Dean was the scene of a riot against enclosures in the spring of 1631; Buchanan Sharp, *In contempt of all authority: rural artisans and riot in the west of England, 1586-1660*, (Berkeley, 1980), p.95.

240 P.R.O., E403/2567 fo.46v, 27 April 1634 (Privy Seal); E403/1748, book 72 fo.108 (payment).

241 P.R.O., S03/8, n.f., June 1627. £728 19s was actually in lieu of his wages & disbursements as admiral of the City fleet in 1626-7.

forced to settle in 1628 for the second reversion to the Buckinghamshire manor of Hanslop.²⁴² But in 1634 Pennington sold his right to Hanslop for £2,000.²⁴³ By the mid-1630s his finances were clearly blossoming, but instead of hoarding his money he loaned it out at interest. Although he was at sea much of the time, his cousin, the London alderman Isaac Pennington, dealt with his financial affairs during his absence.²⁴⁴ By 1640 the value of his estate exceeded £13,730.²⁴⁵

The lure of financial gain will explain why many offices were eagerly sought after. Yet the essential problem of why naval recruitment presented relatively few difficulties remains. Throughout the 1630s there was universal dissatisfaction with wages, leading to widespread recourse to corruption. When in 1634 William Lawrence was examined regarding the unauthorised sale of old cordage, he demanded a salary increase so that he should not 'through want be occasioned to use any unlawfull shifts,...to defraud his Ma[jes]tie'.²⁴⁶ The ill-gotten gains of office were evidently not enough to prevent the Navy's pursers from petitioning for a pay increase in 1639.²⁴⁷

The most striking pay claim was that of the Comptroller and Surveyor, whose increasing unwillingness to subsidise their posts contrasts with the ease with which they were replaced. After Edisbury's death in 1638

242 P.R.O., S03/9, n.f., June 1628 (grant); P.R.O., E403/1740, n.f., 'payments' of 7 June & 7 July. Pennington was initially enthusiastic about the grant because the manor was located only a few miles from Buckingham's country seat; P.R.O., SP16/98/21, 22 March 1628, Pennington to Nicholas. For his later complaints, see SP16/181/83, n.d.; SP16/342/94, n.d.

243 P.R.O., C54/3014/27, 20 April 1634, sale to Sir Thomas Tyrrell.

234 For example, P.R.O., SP16/362/68; SP16/372/22; SP16/374/36.

245 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 2533 fos.93-8v, draft will.

246 P.R.O., SP16/267/45, 5 May 1634, deposition by William Lawrence.

247 P.R.O.30/5/6 (petition book), pp.45-6, Jan. 1639; P.R.O., SP16/429/33, 27 Sept. 1639, pursers to Pennington.

it was reported that there was 'much striving for the place, S[ir] Hen[ry] Maynwaring, C[aptain] Duppa, Mr. Bucke, *cum multis aliis*'.²⁴⁸ Only Sir John Pennington was evidently unwilling to petition for the succession to Edisbury 'unlesse there were a good addition to the salary'.²⁴⁹ It is equally remarkable that there was no shortage of men who wanted to be Victualler in 1635, despite the fates of Apsley and Darrell.²⁵⁰ In the last resort, the prestige which went with office may have outweighed the fear of financial loss. Moreover, the financial burdens of office may ironically have served to stimulate recruitment. In 1628 the Portsmouth Clerk of the Cheque, Matthew Brooke, asked permission to extend his patent to his eldest son, John. It was with remarkable candour that he admitted 'I had a meaninge and a hope in tymes past to have disposed of him in an other manner, but truly his Maj[estie]'s service have proved so heavie to my poore estate as now I have noe other hope to bee able to purchase for him any better preferm[en]t'.²⁵¹ How many other naval officials sought office for their sons for the same reason is an open question.

248 P.R.O., SP16/398/113, 19 Sept. 1638, Smith to Pennington.

249 P.R.O., SP16/397/94, 31 Aug. 1638, Smith to Pennington.

250 P.R.O., SP16/298/28, SP16/475 fos.395v-396, 28 Sept. 1635, Windebank's & Nicholas' notes respectively on victualling tenders; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9296 fo.30, Sept. 1635, notes on Duppa's tender.

251 P.R.O., SP16/91/37, 23 Jan. 1628, Brooke to Nicholas. On Brooke's disbursements for the Navy, see SP16/75/59, 29 Aug. 1627, Brooke to Nicholas.

Chapter 4

THE MANAGEMENT OF NAVAL FINANCE

In May 1641 the Navy and the Exchequer lost control over the management of naval finance to the Long Parliament. Shortly before the passage of the first Tonnage and Poundage bill signalled this unprecedented alteration, the M.P. Sir Simonds D'Ewes castigated the Navy's joint Treasurer, Sir William Russell. 'The navie at this present', he declared, 'might well be compared to an old decayed house which was speedilie to bee repaired, though the Tenants weere to bee punished for ther wast'. In a thinly veiled reference to Russell, D'Ewes opined that there were those who had 'gotten their heads to be crowned with coronets and have in a short space heaped upp vast estates', at the public expense.' The following day he openly accused Russell of mismanagement.²

Did Sir William deserve the tongue-lashing he received from D'Ewes? There is no doubt that much of the Navy was in a bad way. In August 1641 the House of Commons found that, of forty-two ships and pinnaces, twelve 'are so far out of Repair y^t they are hardly useful'.³ This shocking report corroborated the findings of the Principal Officers the previous month, who had been saying as much for some time.⁴ It seemed incomprehensible to an observer like D'Ewes that, after an unheard of level of peacetime expenditure, the cause of all this decay should have lain in anything other than mismanagement and corruption.

1 *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, (New Haven, 1923), ed. Wallace Notestein, pp.499-500.

2 *Ibid.*, p.506.

3 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 6424 (diary of a bishop), fo.94v. I am grateful to Prof. Russell for this reference. See also *Lords' Journals*, iv, 377.

4 Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 15 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 286), fos.230-1, 2 July 1641.

Yet D'Ewes was wrong to point the finger of blame at Russell. In 1636 Sir William and his colleagues had urged the Admiralty to embark upon a building programme to replace twelve of the Navy's most decayed ships.⁵ Despite this sound advice, the Admiralty blamed the Officers after a third of the vessels of the Second Ship Money Fleet subsequently proved leaky.⁶ The leading critic of the condition of the Navy's ships in 1636 was Northumberland, and with his elevation to the Admiralty in 1638 hopes may have been raised that new ships would soon be built. If so they were quickly dashed. As late as December 1640 Russell's fellow Officers were still urging Northumberland to start replacing the Navy's oldest ships. However, the Bishops' Wars had so exhausted the Exchequer that all he could do was refer the matter to Parliament.⁷

D'Ewes blamed the parlous condition of the fleet on the misuse of public funds. The crux of the matter was indeed money, rather than inertia or mismanagement, but D'Ewes clearly misunderstood the purpose of Ship Money. The fullness of the Navy's coffers in the second half of the 1630s disguised an underlying poverty. Ship Money paid only for a sea-going fleet. It is often assumed that it also included the building programme which culminated in the construction of the *Sovereign of the Seas*, but capital expenditure was still the preserve of the Exchequer.⁸ During the 1630s the Exchequer had financed a building programme

5 P.R.O., SP16/321/66, 20 May 1636, 'Remembrances' drawn up by Russell, Edisbury & Fleming.

6 The Officers were not entirely blameless, however: see below, ch.8.

7 Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 15 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 286), fos.137-8v, n.d.

8 Ship Money paid for just 2 of the 11 ships built between 1632-7, the *Expedition & Providence*: P.R.O., SP16/366/82, Nicholas' notes, Aug. 1637. Only £86 10d of the more than £64,000 spent on the construction of the *Sovereign* & the manufacture of her guns can be credited to Ship Money with any certainty. For proof of Exchequer payments, see P.R.O. , E403/2567 fo.105; P.R.O., E404/155/190;

intended to expand the size of the fleet, but there was little left over with which to replace ancient vessels, some of which were more than forty years old. Royal penury, rather than the conduct of Sir William Russell, explains why in 1641 there were nearly as many rotten ships in the fleet as there had been in 1618.

Just as Russell was unfairly accused of mismanagement by D'Ewes, so too his probity was unjustly maligned. For D'Ewes, 'the best publike officers died the poorest men'. There was something in this of course, for it would have made an excellent epitaph for the late Sir Allen Apsley. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suppose that Russell's profits were anything other than legitimate remuneration for loyal service and personal financial risk. Indeed, in 1626 the members of the royal revenue Commission declared themselves satisfied with Russell's 'faire & honest dealing'.⁹ Had there been any contrary suspicion, he would have been edged out of office like Sir Sackville Crowe. Russell undoubtedly made a handsome profit from the poundage to which he was entitled and which had been increased dramatically on his return to office in 1630, but the value of his services was worth the cost.¹⁰ A poor Treasurer was the last thing the Navy needed, as any well informed observer knew.¹¹ His wealth was the necessary prerequisite for sound financial management, because on it depended the Navy's ability to raise loans which the Crown might otherwise have found difficult to raise. D'Ewes' criticisms pointed up the deficiencies of the Navy's finances rather than the shortcomings of the Treasurer.

P.R.O., E405/284 fo.159, E405/285 fos.18,48,75v,76; E405/286 fo.16v; E405/287 fos.22r-v; P.R.O., E351/2277, n.f.

9 University of London, Goldsmiths' MS. 195, vol. 1, fo.28.

10 See above, pp.133-4.

11 P.R.O., SP16/488/26, 6 Jan. 1642, Nicholas to [Pennington].

Like all men, Russell made mistakes. During the early 1620s his accounts were examined by Secretary Coke before being submitted for audit, who sometimes discovered errors. This was just as well, for in 1625 Russell mistakenly charged the wages of *Vanguard's* crew to the Exchequer, whereas he had actually received this money from the French King, in whose service the *Vanguard* was employed against the Rochellese.¹² It was not only in his accounts that Russell made mistakes. In 1623 he allowed himself to be cheated by a lighterman called David Powell. Learning that Powell had delivered some cordage to the Deptford storehouse, Russell paid Powell's wife an advance of £15. It was only later that he discovered that much of the rope had been ruined in transit by damp. Forced to sell it at a loss of more than £30, Russell demanded damages and his money back. Powell retaliated by taking him to court. The case was still being heard in the Court of Requests in June 1625.¹³ Russell was more wary of being cheated thereafter. In 1637 he refused payment to a shipwright for a consignment of masts when he discovered that they were grossly overpriced, disregarding entirely a bill of payment made out by his colleagues.¹⁴

Russell was sometimes reluctant to fork out money for the Navy. On one occasion he refused to pay some contractors, even though they produced bills to prove delivery. When questioned about this, however, Russell claimed that he was so often beset by unpaid contractors that he constantly spent more money than he had in hand. Significantly, the Admiralty viewed his explanation with sympathy, and ordered his

12 Brit. Lib., Add. MSS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS., C173/9), n.d., memo. on Russell's 1625 account.

13 P.R.O., REQ[UESTS] 2/414/118.

14 P.R.O., SP16/363/68,68.I, July 1637, Edward Stevens to Admiralty, & Russell's response.

colleagues, who made out contractors' bills, to co-operate more closely with him so that he should not be called upon to disburse more money than was needed for current service.¹⁵

It was not just contractors who made unjustified complaints against Russell's behaviour. Equally unjust were the strictures of Capt. Plumleigh in 1634. 'What brangles Sir William Russell makes about Payment of the money for this Year's Estimate!', he complained to Lord Deputy Wentworth, who was anxious to ensure the timely provision of funds for the ships of the Irish Guard that year.¹⁶ What Plumleigh did not know, or did not care to mention, was that Russell had not yet received a Privy Seal authorising him to receive and issue money for the ships.¹⁷ However, Russell sometimes took his unwillingness to advance money for the Irish service too far. Towards the end of 1633 Plumleigh returned to Chatham in the *Antelope*, having served in the Irish Sea that summer. Russell refused to pay off the crew until he had received the money from Ireland first. As this was paid only twice a year, at Midsummer and Christmas, the *Antelope's* crew would have been kept in pay needlessly for over two months at a cost of ten pounds a day had not Wentworth's agent in London stepped in by paying Russell £1,400 of the Lord Deputy's private funds without his prior knowledge. The following year Wentworth successfully begged the Admiralty to intervene to prevent a recurrence of this situation, which had left him temporarily out of pocket and not a little disenchanted with Sir William.¹⁸

15 P.R.O., SP16/353 fo.20, 22 May 1637, Admiralty to Principal Officers.

16 *Strafforde's Letters*, i. 180, 16 Jan. 1634.

17 P.R.O., E403/2567 fo.39, Privy Seal, 30 Jan. 1634. Russell did not receive any money until 18 June 1634: P.R.O., E405/284 fo.85.

18 P.R.O., SP63/254/157, 9 Sept. 1634, Wentworth to Admiralty;
Strafforde's Letters, i. 198, 31 Jan. 1634, Wentworth to Coke;
P.R.O., SP16/275/25, 6 Oct. 1634, Principal Officers to Admiralty;

Wentworth's irritation is not surprising, but if anyone was to blame for Russell's behaviour it was the Admiralty, which failed to synchronise payments from the Irish Exchequer with the needs of the Irish ships. Russell could not be faulted for wanting to protect his bank balance.

Wentworth's unfavourable impression of Russell was reinforced by the method of accounting adopted by the Treasurer and his colleagues. Each year the Officers charged the Irish Exchequer with the cost of furnishing the ships from scratch, deducting nothing at all for remains from the previous year.¹⁹ In Wentworth's eyes, this was tantamount to subsidising the Navy in England. The Officers were forced to concede that he had a point, and they promised to amend matters in future.²⁰

Yet Wentworth's criticisms were not always justified. He once claimed that he had paid the same bill twice, but Russell demonstrated that he had confused two separate payments which happened to be for the same amount.²¹ In March 1635 Wentworth unreasonably blamed the Navy Board because the ships earmarked for the Irish Sea had not arrived by the prescribed date. 'I am sure the officers of the Navy are without all Excuse', he wrote, and he accused them of being more interested in 'preserving a few petty mean Profits' than in despatching the ships on time.²² Wentworth's frustration is understandable, but his remarks were unfounded. The Officers had no financial interest in delaying the departure of the Irish ships. Bad weather, desertion and the slowness of the Ordnance Office in sending the ships' munitions explain why they

SP16/264 fo.37, 7 Oct. 1634, Admiralty to Principal Officers.

19 P.R.O., SP63/254/176, 3 Nov. 1634, Wentworth to [Admiralty].

20 SP16/278/30, 10 Dec. 1634, Officers to Admiralty.

21 SP16/278/17.I, 6 Dec. 1634, irregularities regarding Wentworth's accounts.

22 *Strafforde's Letters*, i. 391, 25 March 1635, Wentworth to Coke. See also P.R.O., SP16/284/38, 7 March 1635, Plumleigh to Nicholas.

were delayed. In addition, the Admiralty had insisted on changing the *Antelope* for the *Bonaventure*.²³

The ill-will created by the quarrel between Wentworth and the Navy Board nevertheless had serious repercussions. Wentworth became convinced that the Irish Exchequer would benefit if he could gain control of the Irish naval establishment himself.²⁴ The bad blood engendered by Russell's handling of the Irish account and the development of Kinsale as a naval yard were therefore issues which were intimately related.

Just as Russell was not entirely blameless in his dealings with Wentworth, neither was he faultless when it came to declaring his accounts. These were supposed to be submitted for inspection within six months of the end of each year. In 1626 he was badgered by the Revenue Commission because he had not submitted his accounts for the past five years.²⁵ However, this was a common fault. Four years earlier Sir Allen Apsley had been hounded by the Exchequer for precisely the same offence.²⁶ Moreover, both he and Russell seem almost punctilious by comparison with Russell's predecessor, Sir Robert Mansell. In 1617 Mansell's Paymaster spent at least three weeks drawing up the accounts for the previous twelve years.²⁷

It made little difference to routine financial management if accounts were submitted late. Nevertheless, it was not sensible to allow them to linger unaudited for years on end. The timber purveyor who offered to account for the sale of some branches cut from ship timber four years

23 P.R.O., SP16/284/46, 9 March 1635, Officers to Admiralty

24 See above, p.61.

25 University of London, Goldsmiths' MS. 195, 1. fos.4,14,45.

26 K.A.O., U269/1/ON774, 13 Sept. 1622, Gofton to Cranfield.

27 P.R.O., L[and] R[evenue] 9/71 fo.108v, 25 Jan. 1617, John Wells to Auditor Bingley.

earlier discovered that he 'had not matter sufficient to finish the same'.²⁸ Sir Allen Apsley's estate was probably ruined as a consequence of slow accounting. During the late 1620s Apsley had been so busy that he had not found time to submit his accounts before his death in 1630. In the case of his 1626 and 1627 accounts this was unfortunate, for he had obtained only three of the four signatures required to affirm their accuracy from his fellow Navy Commissioners. Perhaps the King should have bent the rules by allowing one of the former Commissioners to sign them.²⁹ Alternatively, he might have permitted Apsley's estate all such monies which it claimed but which could not be clearly proven, as he did in the case of Sir James Bagg. However, Charles chose to be guided by the advice of the Lord Treasurer, who was unlikely to subvert the regular accounting procedure unless ordered to do so.³⁰ Although Apsley's accounts were eventually audited in 1637, only a fraction of his receipts in 1626 were actually allowed.³¹

Financial mismanagement more often occurred at the top rather than at the bottom of the Navy's administration. In the later 1630s the principal culprit was the King himself. Between 1635 and 1637 a small fortune was squandered on the construction of the *Sovereign of the Seas*. Her guns alone cost nearly £24,000, while her hull cost roughly £40,600. Yet far from proving to be a valuable addition to the fleet, she was so top-heavy that she had to be cut down in 1651. It is true that she more than answered the recently built French flagship, the 1,500 ton

28 P.R.O., LR9/62/1 (Auditor Brinley's warrant book, incomplete foliation), marginal note of 16 July 1639 next to a letter from Cottington to Vane, 19 March 1635.

29 P.R.O., SP16/355/87, 5 May 1637, Order of Privy Council; SP16/357/167, May 1637, Apsley's creditors to Privy Council.

30 Bodl. Libr., MS. Bankes 64/25, 15 March 1636, Coventry & Juxon to Bankes.

31 P.R.O., E351/2426.

La Couronne. As the first ship to sport three full tiers of guns, it could be argued that the prestige the *Sovereign* conferred outweighed her financial cost. However, even at the time the ship had her critics. Chief among them was Sir John Coke, whose plans for the expansion of the fleet in 1631 had not included the construction of an irrelevant showpiece.³² It was clearly unwise to build a ship whose primary function was to impress at the expense of more important projects.

In the second half of the sixteen-thirties the most pressing need was to replace the Navy's oldest ships. This could not have been completely financed with the money the King preferred to spend on the *Sovereign*, but the sums involved would have made a good start. It was not until the *Sovereign* was due to be launched that Charles turned his attention to the problem of an ageing fleet. He concentrated on just three vessels, the *Prince Royal*, the *Merhonour* and the *Red Lion*. However, none was actually replaced. Although the *Lion* was ordered to be sold, she was retained and rebuilt,³³ as was the *Prince*. The *Merhonour* remained untouched, heading the Commons' list of decayed ships in 1641.

Second only in importance to a ship replacement programme was the need to develop Portsmouth. From 1627 there were demands to transfer the Navy's storehouses across the bay to Gosport because of the distance and cost of transporting stores from the existing yard to the ships.³⁴ Moreover, as the old dock had been filled in on the order of the Navy Commissioners in 1623, there was no longer any dry dock facility on the

32 *Phineas Pett*, pp.165-166; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS C173/6), 'A Proposition for the Navie', n.d. (1631).

33 *C.S.P.D.*, 1637-8, pp.18,22; W.S.R.O., Leconfield MS., HMC 40, 21 Jan. 1642, Batten's fleet survey; P.R.O., AO1/1705/88 fo.9. I have not found an order cancelling her sale, or a complete record of what was spent on her rebuild.

34 P.R.O., SP16/56/48, 6 March 1627, order of Special Commissioners.

south coast. It became imperative to remedy this deficiency after 1631, when around a third of the fleet was permanently stationed at Portsmouth on the King's orders. There were also sound strategic reasons for developing Portsmouth. In 1636 the Principal Officers declared that Portsmouth was 'the onlie inlett and outlett for a fleete of ships in all the kingdome, and of much more use then Chatham'. The reason for this was that, while westerly winds might keep a fleet prepared at Chatham penned in the Thames for weeks on end, they would not prevent ships from leaving Portsmouth harbour.³⁵ Earlier it had also been pointed out that a fleet which sailed for Spain would need a month's more victuals and wages if it left from Chatham rather than Portsmouth. The time difference was the same 'as for one to have his sword drawne in his hand, whilst another's rustle in his scabard'.³⁶ Towards the end of his life, Buckingham had become convinced of the need to develop Portsmouth by Capt. Richard Gifford and Sir Henry Mainwaring.³⁷ His assassination in 1628 put paid to plans for development in the short term, as did a commission established for that purpose in 1630, which reported unfavourably on the idea.³⁸ A rumour that the King had declared his intention to build a double dock at Portsmouth in August 1631 was evidently false.³⁹ It was not until January 1635 that Charles ordered

35 P.R.O., SP16/321/66, 20 May 1636, Officers' 'Remembrances'.

36 P.R.O., SP16/278/38, 11 Dec. 1634, anon., 'A Description of Portsmouth Harbour'.

37 P.R.O., SP16/13/62, n.d. (Mainwaring); SP16/40/34, 27 Nov. 1626, Gifford to Buckingham; SP16/45 fo.71, 3 Feb. 1627, resolution of Special Navy Commissioners; SP16/66/55, 9 June 1627, Gifford to Buckingham; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.122, 18 June 1627, Buckingham to various men. Buckingham was unsure whether to repair the dock & storehouses in 1624: Bodl. Libr., MS. Tanner 72 fo.1, n.d., considerations presented to the Council of War.

38 P.R.O., SP16/173/32, 16 Sept. 1630, commissioners' report.

39 Brit. Libr., Add. MS., 64903 fo.26, 15 Aug. 1631, Edisbury to Coke; P.R.O., SP16/199/38, 13 Sept. 1631, Pennington to Nicholas;

the best place for a dock to be marked out by surveyors.⁴⁰ Despite this belated royal conversion, Portsmouth had to wait until the King was dead before it got the dry dock facility it so badly needed.⁴¹

The reason Charles failed to follow up his resolution of January 1635 may be that doubts were subsequently planted in his mind. Seven months after the King declared his intention to develop Portsmouth, Vice-Admiral Sir William Monson wrote to Secretary Windebank urging the government to think again. Monson pointed to the events of that year to illustrate his case. The French, he observed, had put their fleet to sea before the English, so that

if our navy had been devided, some at Chattam & others at Portsmouth, and that in the meane tyme or before our meetinge they had ankored at St. Hellens poynt in the Ile of Wight, those of Portsmouth had beene beleagured & could not have come forth, And those of Chattam as impossible to come to them or ioyne wílth them, unlesse it were a greater force then their owne.

There is no direct evidence that Monson's views were brought to Charles' attention. However, it is suggestive that Windebank placed in square brackets the section of Monson's letter which dealt with Portsmouth.⁴²

Another possible reason for Charles' inertia was that he feared the financial cost. This seems unlikely, however, for although contemporary estimates vary, a new dock and storehouses would not have been expensive. In April 1627 a group of surveyors reckoned that a dock, crane, sawhouse and two new lighters could all be built for less than

SP16/199/46, 15 Sept. 1631, Nicholas to Pennington.

40 C.S.P.D. 1634-5, pp.449-50, 2 Jan. 1635, Admiralty to Principal Officers; P.R.O., SP16/278/47, 13 Dec. 1634, Nicholas' notes. Charles may have been pressured by Coke, who wrote to Windebank in March 1634 that he wished 'wílth my hart that Portsmouth were considered': SP16/262/68.

41 Oppenheim, *Administration of the Royal Navy*, p.297.

42 P.R.O., SP16/296/18, 23 Aug. 1635.

£1,000.⁴³ A few months later the Navy Commissioners calculated the cost of a double dock at £2,000.⁴⁴ Mainwaring supposed that the total cost would be less than £3,000.⁴⁵ Against this outlay must be balanced the financial savings which would have accrued as a result of development. In 1637 Russell estimated that the distance between the existing yard and ships doubled the basic cost of transporting stores. This money would have been saved had the yard been relocated to Gosport.⁴⁶ Mainwaring, too, pointed out the financial benefits when he remarked that stores were much cheaper in the Portsmouth area than around Chatham. Yet the King preferred to squander precious resources on a single battleship than spend a few thousand pounds on the less glamorous but more vital task of improving the Navy's dockyard facilities.

Just as the King did not always spend his money wisely, so too he was sometimes responsible for its waste. The vast sums heaped upon the rebuilding of the 1200 ton *Prince Royal* is a case in point. In 1637 the Principal Officers urged her replacement on the grounds that a rebuild would be prohibitively expensive, but Charles ignored this sound advice.⁴⁷ The final bill came to £17,450, although the Officers had thought even £14,000 was excessive.⁴⁸

The level of waste for which Charles was responsible should not be overstressed. In August 1635 the King was implicitly, but unfairly, accused of wasting Ship Money by Pennington in a letter to Nicholas. The reason for this was that Charles had prepared ten ships for sea over and

43 P.R.O., SP16/60/71, 7-19 April 1627, estimate signed by surveyors.

44 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.75, 12 June 1627, money needed for the Navy. See also A.P.C. 1627-8, p.190.

45 P.R.O., SP16/13/62.

46 P.R.O., SP16/366/3, 26 Aug. 1637, Russell to Nicholas.

47 P.R.O., SP16/374/22, 18 Dec. 1637, Officers to Admiralty.

48 P.R.O., E351/2281,2283, n.f.; P.R.O., AO1/1705/85 fos.9-10.

above those which saw service in the Ship Money fleet, a practice which he repeated the following year.⁴⁹ However, neither the auxiliary squadron equipped in 1635, nor its successor in 1636, actually saw service. On learning that the reserve ships had been ordered to stand down, Pennington expressed his amazement, not because they were ordered to be discharged but because they had been made ready in the first place.⁵⁰ Yet Charles' policy of preparing additional ships was eminently sensible. In 1635 the additional ships were prepared in case of a clash with the French, while the following year Charles sought to guard against the possibility of an outbreak of hostilities with the Dutch over the question of fishing licences.⁵¹ In the event of an armed confrontation, Charles would have been seen to have been prudent. Perhaps the most damning indictment of Pennington's criticism of the King, however, is to be found in his statement that Ship Money as a whole would have been better 'saft as spent'. This reveals Pennington's frustration that the fleet had failed to corner the French ships rather than an appreciation of the needs of Palatinate diplomacy.⁵²

On a daily basis the Navy undoubtedly spent more than it needed, especially when laying in stores. Yet it is doubtful whether this could ever have been wholly avoided. In one sense, glutting the stores was

49 For the preparation of the 10 ships in 1635, see *C.S.P.D. 1635*, pp.63,121,246; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.139v; P.R.O., SP16/289/82; P.R.O., E404/155/198. For the cost, see P.R.O., E405/284 fos.134v,159; SP16/303/106. In 1636 the cost was refunded to the Exchequer, together with £6,500 spent on resupplying the magazine, by the Ship Money fund: SP16/305/1; P.R.O., E403/3041, pp.66-7. For the preparation of the 10 ships in 1636, see SP16/305/36, SP16/319/98, SP16/320/14,38, SP16/321/34; P.R.O., PC2/44 fos.318v-19v.

50 P.R.O., SP16/295/18, 3 Aug. 1635, Pennington to Nicholas.

51 For unmistakeably clear evidence of an insurance policy regarding the Dutch, see Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.20, 4 July 1636, Nicholas to Northumberland.

almost as bad as not replenishing them, because items such as cordage and timber were liable to deteriorate if they were kept too long. But it was only with an improbably precise knowledge of future requirements that an administration could maintain the proper balance between supply and demand. The fallacy that glutting could be avoided if administrators were more careful was voiced by John Hollond in 1638, who decried the fact that unspent stores bought five years earlier had deteriorated by roughly twenty per cent of their value.⁵³ The Navy Commissioners, too, criticised the regime they replaced for purchasing an excessive number of masts, a third of which would perish before they could be used.⁵⁴ However, it was indicative of the endemic nature of the problem that they were themselves accused of a similar fault. In 1627 the Special Navy Commissioners instructed one of their colleagues to specify the quantity of stores needed for a six month voyage, taking care 'that too much be not delyvered of one thing and too little of another, whereby his Majestties stores have been superfluously wasted, and yet there hath been want in some particulars'.⁵⁵

Dr. McGowan has suggested that, during Sir William Russell's first term of office as Treasurer (1618-27), finances were 'probably more efficiently controlled than at any other time between the death of Hawkins and the latter part of the Civil War'.⁵⁶ Yet this distinction between the 1620s and 1630s is artificial, for the quality of financial administration in both decades was very similar. The Principal Officers, no less than their immediate predecessors, exhibited an abiding concern

52 See above, pp.11-12.

53 *Hollond's Discourses*, pp.59-60.

54 *Commissions of Enquiry*, p.267.

55 P.R.O., SP16/52/52, 31 Jan. 1627, Spec. Commissioners to Phineas Pett.

56 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under Buckingham', p.86.

with avoiding waste. For instance, in January 1636 they advised the Admiralty to order the immediate repair of six warships rather than wait until later in the year 'when shortnesse of daies and unseasonableness of weather maie force the worke at farre dearer rates'.⁵⁷

The manner in which stores were often bought seemingly militated against financial waste, for in theory the Navy could buy much of what it needed at a discount. Like the Board of Greencloth, the Navy was entitled to requisition stores by purveyance, thereby freeing it from the need to compete in an open market. Purveyance was authorised by commissions under the Great Seal, which permitted those who refused to sell to the Navy to be imprisoned at the King's pleasure.⁵⁸ Although commissions promised suppliers 'reasonable prices' for their goods, the Navy at least did not think that this meant that it was bound to pay the going rate. In 1630 Denis Fleming complained to Nicholas that Oxfordshire's J.P.s construed the words 'his Ma[ajes]t[ie]s reasonable prices' to mean that the Navy's timber purveyor should pay fifteen pence per mile like anyone else for the use of local carts, 'whereas yow know his Ma[ajes]t[ie]s reasonable price is after the rate of vd for every mile'.⁵⁹ On the other hand, when in 1634 the Earl of Southampton obtained the King's assurance that the Navy would not buy any of the

57 P.R.O., SP16/311/19, 4 Jan. 1636.

58 The texts of only 3 such commissions are known to survive: P.R.O., C193/8 no.37, 4 March 1625, James I to civil authorities; C193/144 no.67, 30 Dec. 1624, James I to civil authorities (I am grateful to Mr. James Robertson for both these references); Clwyd Record Office, D/E/1322, 2 April 1635, commission for Edisbury. On at least one occasion a commission was issued under the Sign Manual: Brit. Lib., Egerton MS. 2552 fo.3v, 18 May 1628, Charles I to Sir James Bagg.

59 P.R.O., SP16/168/51, 14 June 1630, Fleming to Nicholas. In 1636 the Principal Officers informed the Admiralty that 800 loads of timber taken up in Surrey & Sussex would cost a total of 8s 9d per load over & above the money paid by the King to transport: SP16/327/95.

timber he had decided to sell to pay off his debts, the news was greeted by Palmer and Edisbury as 'a needlesse mocon, for that his Majestie paies as much...as any subject doth'.⁶⁰

The advantage of buying at a discount was probably offset by the usual failure to pay promptly. The shipwright George Maplizden, who in 1642 claimed to have sold more than a thousand pounds worth of timber to the Navy at a cut price in the expectation that he would be paid quickly and in cash, learned the hard way that there was no necessary correlation between discount rates and rapidity of payment.⁶¹ The same problem undoubtedly affected those suppliers whose stores were requisitioned by the Navy, for there was nothing in the King's commission which specified when such stores had to be paid for. This omission was undoubtedly useful, permitting the Navy to buy stores when it did not have the money to pay for them. However, the disadvantage of such a system was that merchants who were forced to endure lengthy delays ensured that 'the forbearance is included in the price'.⁶² Coupled with the added cost of the Treasurer's poundage, this may actually have meant that the Navy paid an inflated price for its goods.⁶³ Clearly, if the Navy was often able to side-step market forces, it indirectly paid for the privilege.

Money was frequently wasted by the Navy because the Exchequer was too poor to allow it to do otherwise. During periods of financial shortage, such as the war years of the 1620s, the Navy's ability to minimise its

60 P.R.O., SP16/269/41, 6 June 1634, Palmer & Edisbury to Admiralty.

61 P.R.O., SP16/489/105, n.d., Maplizden to Navy Committee, n.d. (1642).

62 *Holland's Discourses*, p.71. It is not clear how this statement squares with the Navy's theoretical ability to set prices.

63 On the effect of the Treasurer's poundage on prices, see Sir Peter Buck's deposition of 1608 in *Commissions*, pp.173-4. The only known comparison of prices paid by merchants & the Navy in the early 17th century was made by the Navy Commissioners in 1618: *ibid.*, pp.267-9.

costs was under the greatest strain. In August 1626 the Navy Commissioners informed their colleague, Secretary Coke, that merely for want of £13,775 they were forced to keep 1,945 seamen in pay at a cost of £4,000 a month. This had so far cost the Exchequer £50,000, which was 'soe exorbytant and unsufferable a Charge...as is not meet to bee endured'.⁶⁴ Matters were never so bad in the 1630s, but there were always loans to contract, and therefore interest to be paid. Although rates were fixed at eight per cent, the accumulation of interest over time meant that the Navy could end up paying a considerably higher percentage. In 1634 Russell was paid £1,537 on a loan of £5,000 he had made to the Exchequer in July 1630, a profit to the lender(s) of more than thirty per cent.⁶⁵

Just as it was impossible for the Navy to avoid waste, so too it proved unable to insulate itself entirely against market forces. Commissions under the Great Seal undoubtedly helped the Navy to escape the realities of competition at home, but they were of no use if purchases were to be made abroad. There, the risk of competition could best be minimised by acting as secretly as possible. When in 1631 the Admiralty ordered the Woolwich ropemaker, Herman Barnes, to go to Amsterdam to buy 200 tons of strong 'Russian' hemp, they instructed him 'not to acquaint any English Merchant or factor with the true cause of yor coming thither' for fear that his presence would prompt a price increase or the pre-emption of the market by others.⁶⁶

It was not just private merchants whose competition the Navy had to fear. Many of its own shipwrights had yards of their own, and it was

64 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64889 fo.101, 16 Aug. 1626; Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C98/14), 17 Aug. 1626; University of London, Goldsmiths' MS. 195, i. fo.17v.

65 P.R.O., E405/284 fo.86, payment of 2 July 1634.

66 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.156, 15 July 1631.

hardly surprising if they sometimes put their own interests before those of the Navy. One of the allegations levelled by Coke against Burrell in 1626 was that he had engrossed Islingham woods. Located just 1½ miles from Chatham New Dock, these trees would have made an ideal source of naval timber.⁶⁷ Similarly, in 1634 Edisbury informed Coke that the shipwright Henry Goddard and various other naval employees had bought a wood in Rainham which would have proved useful to the Navy. There was nothing that could be done about this, but Edisbury thought their wages should be docked 'for the tyme they are in hand with that tymber, in reguard of their sawcines to buy a bargaine out of the King's hand.'⁶⁸

The members of the Navy Board were corporately responsible for overspending. The most common object of overspending was ship construction. In 1633 the estimate for building the *James* and *Unicorn* was roughly £8,468, whereas the actual cost rose to over £12,632.⁶⁹ The following year the cost of two third rates, the *Swallow* and *Leopard*, doubled the budgeted £5,770.⁷⁰ This was almost as much as it had cost to build the second rates *Henrietta Maria* and *Charles* in 1631-2.⁷¹ One reason for this was that the ships were built much larger than intended, either through disobedience or incompetence. An additional cause was the Navy's inability or reluctance to force its senior shipwrights to attend constantly.⁷² The obvious solution was to ban them from owning their own yards, but as this would probably have required them to be compensated

67 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C173/2), charges against Burrell, n.d., p.8.

68 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64908 fo.7v, 10 March 1634.

69 P.R.O., E403/2567 fo.17, Privy Seal, 15 April 1633, estimated the cost at £7,618 12s in addition to £850 'already allowed'.

70 *Ibid.*, fo.26r-v, 25 July 1633; P.R.O., E351/2273, n.f.

71 P.R.O., E351/2272, n.f.

72 *Hollond's Discourses*, p.29. See also above, pp.110-1.

for loss of income it is not surprising that nothing was done.⁷³ Overspending on shipbuilding may have been encouraged by the ease with which the Treasurer could dip into other funds. Thus Russell anticipated money due to the Ordinary to help pay for the construction costs of the *Charles* and *Henrietta Maria* when it became apparent that the money allowed for that purpose would not suffice.⁷⁴ In an emergency, however, this sort of flexibility was clearly essential. For instance, in 1626 Russell raided the Ordinary to pay off a large number of mariners who had served on the Cadiz expedition the previous year.⁷⁵

Overspending on ship construction was endemic. Dr. McGowan has sought to show that, during the first five years of the Navy Commission (1619-23), expenditure was kept on a tight rein. Yet even the Commissioners may have had problems meeting their financial targets. William Burrell built ten new ships for the Navy, and according to the Navy's accounts he did so considerably under budget.⁷⁶ The shipwright Edward Boate, however, reported a rumour that Burrell had concealed considerable overspending by misapplying half the money earmarked for repairing the ships which served on the Algiers expedition.⁷⁷ This may, of course, have been the loose talk of a rival shipwright. On the other hand, the Commissioners themselves admitted to having spent £3,982 in constructing a new dock at Chatham, which they had originally costed at £2,000.⁷⁸

73 However, this reform seems to have been implemented sometime before 1660: John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III, 1689-1697*, (Cambridge, 1953), pp.103-5.

74 P.R.O., E403/2567 fos.60v-61, Privy Seal, 26 April 1634.

75 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64889 fo.67, 24 July 1626, Russell to Coke.

76 A.P. McGowan, 'William Burrell (c.1570-1630) a forgotten Stuart shipwright', pp.93-4, in *'Ingrid' and other Studies*, ed. PGW Annis & Jan Allwright (N.M.M., 1978).

77 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C101/6), n.d. (before 1626).

78 K.A.O., U269/1/ON/8900, n.d., financial report, 1623/4. In 1629 it

The most striking example of overspending on a new ship was the *Sovereign*. In 1630 the cost of building a first rate, excluding masts and guns, was estimated at about £10 a ton.⁷⁹ On this basis, the hull of the 1,522 ton *Sovereign* ought to have cost about £15,220, with perhaps another four or five hundred pounds for masts. This was close to the original estimate of £16,647 4s.⁸⁰ In fact, this sum did not even cover the final wage bill of £20,948. Total expenditure on the ship, minus her guns, amounted to £40,833, which was nearly two and a half times the original estimate.⁸¹ This was perhaps partly because neither of the *Sovereign's* builders had a history of staying within budget. Phineas Pett had built the *Prince Royal* in 1610 at a cost far in excess of his original estimate. His son Peter, who had built the *Leopard*, proved similarly profligate. However, the *Sovereign*, like the *Prince*, was deliberately targeted by the King for extravagance. The original allowance for decorating the ship was £2,000, but the amount actually expended was £6,691. The ship's launch also cost a small fortune. In December 1637 a Privy Seal for £6,100 was issued for this, 'a greater some then was either demanded or allowed in any former Estimate'.⁸² A further £2,000 had already been issued by the Exchequer in November.⁸³

The money squandered on the *Sovereign* should not obscure the fact that it was difficult, if not impossible, to estimate costs accurately. One

was noted that another £1,000 was needed to complete the New Dock: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.172.

79 Longleat, Coventry Papers, vol.117, pp.41-3.

80 *Ibid.*, pp.103-4; P.R.O., E403/2567, fo.105. An earlier estimate drawn up by Phineas Pett for £13,860 was disregarded: P.R.O., SP16/287/73.

81 P.R.O., E351/2277, n.f. This figure excludes the Treasurer's poundage but includes the cost of building 2 small pinnaces from off-cuts, the *Greyhound* & *Roebuck*: P.R.O., SP16/378/32; *Phineas Pett*, p.162.

82 P.R.O., E351/2277, n.f.

83 P.R.O., E405/287 fo.21v, payment of 14 Nov. 1637.

of the most glaring pieces of financial miscalculation concerned the cost of salvaging the *Anne Royal*, holed by her own anchor while moored in the Thames in April 1636. The Principal Officers in charge of raising the wreck recommended to the Admiralty a proposal advocated by six of their subordinates. This claimed that the *Anne* could be righted at a cost of £1,450.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, this figure proved wildly optimistic, for the ship was actually salvaged at a cost of £5,466 10s 5d.⁸⁵ Matters were made worse when the ship was subsequently found to be not worth the cost of repair.⁸⁶ It was hardly surprising that the Admiralty was annoyed at this waste of ratepayers' money,⁸⁷ but whether the Officers were to blame seems doubtful. Neither they nor their advisers realised how difficult it would prove to float the ship.⁸⁸

Overspending was not a problem which afflicted the victualling department. As far as the Exchequer was concerned, victualling estimates were correct, even if the actual service to which they related cost more. This apparent paradox resulted from the fact that the Victualler was a contractor, who was bound to guarantee payment at a fixed rate, even if he had to dig into his own pocket. Privatisation necessarily eliminated the problem of overspending. This was one of the most powerful arguments for privatising the rest of the Navy. Indeed, privatisation promised not merely to prevent overspending, but also to reduce costs. In 1579 and 1585 Queen Elizabeth had privatised first the

84 P.R.O., SP16/320/77, 11 May 1636.

85 P.R.O., PC2/50, pp.636-40, Council meeting, 15 Sept. 1639. The figure excludes the Treasurer's poundage.

86 P.R.O., SP16/336/47-47.II, 25 Nov. 1636, Principal Officers to Admiralty, & enclosures. The ship was subsequently sold for £312: C.S.P.D. 1636-7, p.462; P.R.O., E401/2459, n.f., payment by John Suthun, 2 Oct. 1637.

87 *Phineas Pett*, p.163.

88 P.R.O., SP16/326/35, 14 June 1636, Edisbury to Nicholas.

ships in Ordinary and then ship construction, handing over both to the Navy Treasurer, Sir John Hawkins.⁸⁹ Under Charles I no such deals were ever struck, although over the winter of 1636-7 the government came close to adopting what looks to have been a pilot scheme drawn up along the same lines. Three ships were to have been fitted out by Sir William Russell at the rate of £3 a man per month rather than the usual rate of £3 14s for service in the Channel.⁹⁰ The scheme earned the guarded approval of Edward Nicholas, who thought the idea might work 'if care be taken that his Majesties shippes be compleately furnished wth all manner of stores according to ye proporcon & goodness wherewth they used to be setforth by ye office of ye Navy, and that ye cupplem^{en}t of men allowed to each shipp be kept compleate'.⁹¹ Herein lay the rub, however, for there was no guarantee that quality would be put before cost. What was to prevent the contractor, whose object was to make money, from using last year's remains rather than supplying brand new stores?⁹² Moreover, while Russell evidently thought a contract feasible, he refused to pay for repairs because the expense was impossible to

89 Michael Lewis, *The Hawkins Dynasty: Three Generations of a Tudor Family*, (London, 1969), pp.129-38. For the most recent work on Hawkins' 'Bargains', see Simon Adams, 'New Light on the 'Reformation' of John Hawkins: the Ellesmere Naval Survey of January 1584', *English Historical Review*, cv (1990), pp.96-111.

90 P.R.O., SP16/338/32, n.d., estimated cost of privatisation; SP16/347/87, c.22 Feb. 1637, draft articles of agreement between Admiralty & Russell. Although the estimate is endorsed 'Sir William Russelles proposition', it was clearly not his idea (see n. 93). The scheme may have originated with Edisbury, who seems to have discussed it with Coke as early as Sept. 1636: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C90/7), 16 Sept. 1636, Edisbury to Coke. Alternatively, the idea may have come from the King. In 1635 the City persuaded Charles to reduce its Ship Money assessment after demonstrating that the Navy's ships could be set out at £3 per man per month: P.R.O., C115/M36/8448, 6 Feb. 1635, [Rossingham to Scudamore].

91 P.R.O., SP16/338/31.I, Nicholas' notes.

92 P.R.O., SP16/344/16, 15 Jan. 1637, queries regarding the scheme.

determine in advance.⁹³ For these and other reasons, the Admiralty wisely advised the King to drop the idea.⁹⁴

It was not always desirable for expenditure to be limited by a fixed budget. When ships underwent major repair it was often difficult to know what was necessary to be spent until they were actually dismantled. This problem was appreciated by the Admiralty Commissioners. In 1634 a Privy Seal authorising a variety of naval expenses included £1,700 for the cost of repairing ships incurred over and above the estimate for precisely this reason.⁹⁵ The difficulty was also understood by the Navy Board, for in 1630 the Board contractually obliged Goddard to report additional defects in the ships committed to his charge for repair.⁹⁶

In the early 1630s, however, it was the policy of Lord Treasurer Portland to retrench expenditure as far as possible. Neither he nor his fellow Admiralty Commissioners can have been pleased to learn from the Principal Officers in April 1634 that a further £2,612 14s 6d was needed annually over and above the Ordinary for essential repair work, 'which has lately occasioned a yearly surcharge'.⁹⁷ Edisbury went to the trouble of drawing up a proposal to incorporate this sum in the Navy's annual running costs in a manner 'as nere as I can to sort wilit[h] my Lo[r]d Threlasure[r]'s way', but his proposal was not adopted.⁹⁸ Instead, the Admiralty obtained a warrant for a further £1,700 in December 1634

93 P.R.O., SP16/344/45, 20 Jan. 1637, Russell to Admiralty.

94 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.486, Admiralty meeting, 23 Feb. 1637.

95 P.R.O., E403/2567 fo.91, 9 Dec. 1634.

96 P.R.O., SP16/163/50.I, 25 March 1630, agreement between Goddard, Burrell & Phineas Pett.

97 P.R.O., SP16/265/69, 16 April 1634, Principal Officers to Admiralty. Their report 12 months earlier reckoned there was an even greater disparity between receipts & requirements: SP16/237/90.

98 P.R.O., SP16/246/12, 4 Sept. 1633, Edisbury to Nicholas. Edisbury's new estimate would seem to be SP16/284/4.

for repairs. As this was a 'one-off' payment it was a token gesture. It disguised the fact that Whitehall then placed a greater premium on cost than it did on the condition and safety of the Navy's ships, as the Admiralty's own Secretary correctly observed.⁹⁹

The origins of this attitude lay as much in the mentality of Sir John Coke as they did in the financial constraints under which he and his fellow Admiralty Commissioners operated. During the twenty years between 1618 and 1638 Coke played an invaluable role in naval administration, but nevertheless he had his faults. In particular, he assumed that greater economy necessarily meant greater efficiency. The most striking manifestation of this thinking was his solution to the problem of absentee ship carpenters. In the *Report* of 1618, which he drafted, Coke recommended the abolition of master carpenters as standing officers because of their persistent non-attendance.¹⁰⁰ The subsequent implementation of this proposal represented a financial saving of more than £353 a year, a valuable economy at a time when the government was looking to retrench its finances. Nonetheless, abolition was a perverse solution to the problem of absenteeism. This aspect of the Navy Commissioners' 'reform' programme proved to be a serious mistake.

In April 1631 the Principal Officers advocated the addition of thirty-four carpenters to the Navy's existing shipkeepers. Significantly, they assured the Admiralty that this could be done at no extra expense if some of the less important shipkeepers were dismissed.¹⁰¹ But although the Admiralty had just launched a new reform campaign, nothing was done. With no-one to attend day to day ship repairs, a general survey in April

⁹⁹ See above, pp.47-8.

¹⁰⁰ *Commissions of Enquiry*, pp.282,300.

¹⁰¹ P.R.O., SP16/189/88, endorsed as received in April 1631.

1633 exposed large-scale faults in the fabric of the King's ships which had arisen over the previous three years.¹⁰² By February 1634 the call for carpenters to be reinstated had been renewed, for their permanent presence aboard ship 'would prevent not only such defects as drips and private leaks, but also ye sudden danger whilch in a moment might happen'.¹⁰³ Yet only at Portsmouth, which lacked a sufficient pool of skilled shipwrights, were carpenters-in-Ordinary reintroduced.¹⁰⁴ It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the annual financial saving to the Exchequer of a few hundred pounds represented a false economy. In the long term it cost the Navy much more than it ever saved in paying to repair ships whose defects had increased because they had not been dealt with swiftly, as the Officers pointed out in April 1634.

One of the keys to sound financial management was proper book-keeping. In general the Navy kept its books well, but there was no regular method of recording its level of debt, a fact which the Admiralty Commissioners deplored but did nothing to remedy.¹⁰⁵ When the Admiralty wished to know how much the Navy owed it had to ask its subordinates to find out, which might take some time. In April 1631, for example, Portland was so besieged by unpaid mariners, shipwrights and their wives that he instructed the Principal Officers to list all the Navy's debts. The Officers duly compiled three books, which they summarised, but they did not submit their findings until November.¹⁰⁶

102 P.R.O., SP16/237/69,70.

103 P.R.O., SP16/260/78, notes of ship defects, Chatham, 20 Feb. 1634.

104 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.69, 29 Jan. 1639, note regarding the number of servants allowed in the Navy.

105 P.R.O., SP16/226/7, Windebank's notes of Admiralty meetings.

106 P.R.O., SP16/203/12, 7 Nov. 1631, Officers to Admiralty; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C148/12), 6 Dec. 1631, memo by Coke. The books are wanting.

It would be a mistake to make too much of the procedural omission. During the war years of the 1620s the Navy Commissioners repeatedly reminded Buckingham of the enormity of the Navy's debts, and of the dire consequences which would ensue if they were not settled.¹⁰⁷ What really mattered was not the absence of any proper procedure for reporting the size of the debt, but the response which such information elicited. For instance, in August 1626 the Navy Commissioners were alarmed at the ruinous state of the Navy's finances, but Buckingham's chief concern was to equip Lord Willoughby's fleet for another assault on Spain. While the Duke exhorted Apsley to continue extending his credit, the Commissioners reminded Coke of the money owed to the Victualler.¹⁰⁸ No amount of administrative alteration was going to prevent this sort of thing.

Just as there was no proper method of recording the Navy's debt, neither was there an entirely satisfactory way of gauging precise levels of expenditure. However, this was probably of more inconvenience to the historian than to contemporaries, who evidently seldom wished to calculate total costs. The Navy's Declared Accounts purport to provide a comprehensive statement of annual spending, but they were incomplete for two reasons. First, they excluded the sums issued directly by the Exchequer to those officials who held office by patent. Often, these payments were relatively insubstantial. However, in 1637 a determined attempt to clear the back-log of fees meant that the Exchequer disbursed no less than £2,248 5s 1d in direct payments to naval officials.¹⁰⁹

107 For example, Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.67, 8 Dec. 1627, Commissioners to Buckingham.

108 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.152v, 12 Aug. 1626, Buckingham to Apsley; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C160/17), 16 Aug. 1626, Wolstenholme, Burrell & Fleming to Coke.

109 Adduced from P.R.O., E403/1750-1.

Secondly, the Navy's accounts never included the cost of the Ordnance Office, it being 'an Office aparte'.¹¹⁰ This was unfortunate, because it is often impossible to differentiate between naval and non-naval costs in the Ordnance Office's own accounts. On the rare occasions when contemporaries endeavoured to calculate total costs, their figures made no allowance for fees paid direct from the Exchequer, the money spent on the Ordnance Office, or the payment of arrears. The royal revenue balance of 1635 put the Navy's annual cost between 1631 and 1635 at £41,570.¹¹¹ Yet receipts from the Exchequer in every year covered by the balance substantially exceeded this figure. Indeed, in 1633 the Exchequer disbursed £83,483, which was nearly twice the sum in the balance.¹¹² The same defects characterise the only known MS. to detail total naval expenditure over a five year period, the years 1636-40.¹¹³

The problems of calculating total expenditure are compounded by the difficulty of knowing when money was spent. Oppenheim treated the Navy's Declared Accounts as though they were an exact statement of annual expenditure, and in theory this was what they were supposed to be. However, the slowness with which accounts were usually submitted for audit meant that it was possible to include in one account money spent at a later date. In 1638, for instance, the Admiralty granted permission for all the construction costs of the *Sovereign* to be placed on the 1636 account for the sake of simplicity, although the ship was actually built

110 See above, n.4.

111 P.R.O., E407/78/5. I am grateful to Prof. Russell for this reference, & for furnishing me with a transcript. The balance was probably drawn up by Sir Robert Pye.

112 Adduced from P.R.O., E403/1746-7. The figure includes £7,375 repayable from Ireland. An astonishing £13,653 was interest on loans.

113 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 48168 fo. 34, n.d. (1641?). It was probably compiled at Parliament's behest. I am grateful to Miss Joan Henderson for this reference.

and paid for over a three year period.¹¹⁴ A more precise record of payments are the Quarter Books from which the Declared Accounts were themselves compiled.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, they were apparently the property of their compilers rather than the property of the Crown, which is probably why most have not survived. What may look like poor book-keeping is in fact a comment on the state of the archive.

The absence of detailed records of expenditure makes the task of assessing the Navy's financial management difficult but not impossible. For much of the time, especially during the war years of the 1620s, the Navy was so underfunded that no amount of pennypinching could compensate for the lack of adequate financial resources. Despite this, the Navy Treasurer was likely to be blamed when money ran out, even by those who should have known better. At a meeting of the Crown Revenue Commissioners in October 1626, Sir William Russell was grilled by his fellow Navy Commissioner, the Exchequer auditor Sir Robert Pye, after large numbers of sailors came to Court seeking their wages. Pye thought it strange that the seamen should be so clamorous, for Russell had recently received no less than £27,000 to pay them off. However, as Russell pointed out, 'all that, & much more, would not serve the turne, there being still upon the Navye an arreare of 150,000l'.¹¹⁶

At the heart of the matter lay the government's refusal to cut its coat according to its cloth. Before 1628 the regime failed to secure a substantial vote of parliamentary supply with which to prosecute the

114 *C.S.P.D.* 1637-8, p.62, 17 Feb. 1638, Admiralty to Officers.

115 The only Treasurer's Quarter Books which are known to survive for the period 1625-40 are Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649 (2 vols.) & 1655. For the surviving Victualler's Quarter Books, see P.R.O., E101/67/28, & National Library of Scotland, MS. 2829.

116 University of London, Goldsmiths' MS. 195, 1. fo.45.

wars against France and Spain. Yet, in setting his objectives, Buckingham displayed a disregard for financial realities which others found alarming. On learning in January 1626 that the Duke intended to increase the pay of the Navy's seamen before discharging the fleet which had been sent to Cadiz, Secretary Coke could hardly contain himself. 'For God's sake (my good Lord)', he wrote, 'lett us first see how possibly wee can raise monies to discharge this unfortunate armie & fleet that cometh home before their bee anie debate or mencion of increasing more charge'.¹¹⁷

The inevitable consequence of over-ambitious thinking was that the government was forced to make difficult decisions about the allocation of precious resources. In 1627, for instance, the requirements of the Ré fleet understandably took precedence over those of the Channel squadron. As late as 6 June the Navy Commissioners complained, with tactful understatement, that the Ordinary 'is not soe fully settled as is requisite'.¹¹⁸ The Admiral of the Narrow Seas, Sir Henry Mervyn, rather more bluntly likened the late provision of shipping to 'a showre out of season'.¹¹⁹ The Irish squadron was even more badly affected. In October 1627 Secretary Conway defended the decision to send to Ré the two warships which had originally been destined for the Irish Sea. 'Though there want noe sence here of the use and importance of sendinge those shipps to yow', he told Lord Deputy Falkland, 'yet that necessitie whilch cannot otherwise bee supplied stayes them for a time, till some

117 P.R.O., SP16/11/64; McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under Buckingham', pp.111-112. For the introduction of a new pay scale, see below, pp.212-213.

118 P.R.O., SP16/66/33, Navy Commissioners to Buckingham.

119 P.R.O., SP16/70/47, 7 July 1627, Mervyn to Nicholas. On 27 May Mervyn complained that he had only one ship under his command: SP16/64/76, 27 May 1627, Mervyn to Buckingham.

necessarie provision may bee made'.¹²⁰ Nothing could illustrate with greater clarity the government's decision to subordinate the needs of defence to those of offence.¹²¹

During the early 1630s the government continued to give low priority to naval defence. While Edward Nicholas believed that this was because there was an inherent contradiction in the headship of the Admiralty Commission by the Lord Treasurer,¹²² the situation would not really have been resolved by relieving Portland of his naval duties. In reality, Nicholas' criticism merely serves to underscore the suspicion that, before the introduction of Ship Money, it was impossible to reconcile the Navy's financial needs with those of the Exchequer. Even after the issue of Ship Money writs, the Navy's financial problems were by no means solved, for by the mid-1630s the Navy was badly in need of capital investment. Unfortunately, the limited resources available were squandered by the King on building the *Sovereign of the Seas* rather than on developing Portsmouth or replacing some of the Navy's oldest ships. None of this was the fault of the Navy's administrators, of course, many of whom were involved in an endless struggle to curb expenditure and limit waste. The fact is, there was no-one who could stop the King from spending his money the way he saw fit. When D'Ewes pointed an accusing finger at Russell in March 1641, he ought instead to have directed his anger at Charles I.

120 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 11033 fo.103, 31 Oct. 1627. For the order directing the 2 ships to Ré, see *A.P.C. 1627*, pp.82-3.

121 For comparable evidence concerning the Victualler, see below, pp.252-253. For a detailed case-study of this problem, see Thrush, 'In Pursuit of the Frigate, 1603-40', *Historical Research* (forthcoming).

122 See above, pp.47-50.

PART THREE

SERVICING THE FLEET

Chapter 5

MANNING

Speaking through the mouthpiece of his fictional admiral, the former naval captain Nathaniel Boteler observed in about 1638 that he had heard that there was an 'unwonted scarcity' of mariners 'as well in respect of sufficiency as number'. What promised to be the start of a revealing exchange between the admiral and an equally imaginary captain, fizzled out when the latter chose to duck the issue entirely.¹ This chapter will seek to resume the debate between the admiral and the captain, and will ask questions about the degree of success with which the Navy was able to man its ships, the problems which it faced in meeting its objectives, and the adequacy of the machinery at its disposal.

The Navy's ships rarely put to sea chronically undermanned. More than ninety-two per cent of the seamen needed to man Lindsey's fleet in 1628 were found.² In 1632 the *Convertive* lacked just two men prior to sailing, while the following year the *Vanguard* put to sea with only one man wanting of her establishment.³ A muster of the crews of some of the ships of the First Ship Money Fleet in May 1635 actually revealed marginal overmanning, and the surplus was ordered to be discharged.⁴ Severe undermanning was a problem often more apparent than real. In November 1626 the returning ships of Willoughby's abortive expedition were mustered, among them the *Red Lion*. Although she was crewed by just 211 men, when her specified establishment was 250, this figure nevertheless exceeded her allotted strength for

1 *Boteler's Dialogues*, ed. W.G. Perrin, N.R.S., lxx (1929), p.46.

2 P.R.O., SP16/120/60.I, fleet list, n.d.

3 N.M.M., JOD/1/2, pp.4-5,35.

4 P.R.O., SP16/289/6, 18/19 May 1635.

service in coastal waters.⁵ Nevertheless, there were occasions during the war years of the 1620s when the Navy's ships were seriously undermanned. The most notable example occurred in 1628, when the Earl of Denbigh discovered that his fleet lacked forty-four per cent of its manning requirement.⁶ This forced Denbigh to abandon two of his vessels, distributing their crews among the remaining ships.⁷ The crews of the ships of the Channel Guard were also heavily depleted later that year to provide seamen for Lindsey's fleet. Two captains who lost one hundred men each complained that they were left with hardly enough sailors 'to handle our Sailes, much lesse to ply of ulr Ordinance in a fight'.⁸

Although the Navy normally got its ships to sea almost fully manned, this did not necessarily mean that an adequate stock of seamen existed. In 1636 one officer opined that the men who had been pressed that year were 'the refuse of the whole kingdom'.⁹ This raises the question whether there was a shortage of mariners, or whether the Navy simply proved incapable of tapping the manpower resources available. An answer is suggested by a letter written by Admiral John Pennington. In the spring of 1627 Pennington ordered two of his officers to go ashore to remedy a twenty-five per cent shortfall in the crews of his ships. Returning home empty-handed, they reported that the civil authorities had claimed that no mariners could be found. 'But', wrote an emphatic Pennington to the Lord Admiral, 'I know there be men, and good men, w^hilch doe absent themselves and are winked

5 P.R.O., SP16/39/15, muster, 29 Nov. 1626. For the Navy's manning rates, see SP16/215/108, Navy list, April 1632. The rates were altered in 1633.

6 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297, fos.73r-v, fleet list, 22 March 1628.

7 P.R.O., SP16/98/27, 23 March 1628, Denbigh to Buckingham; SP16/101/24, 17 April 1628, Denbigh to Buckingham.

8 P.R.O., SP16/117/60, 23 Sept. 1628, Captains Parker & Paramour to Nicholas.

9 *Hollond's Discourses*, p.366.

at'.¹⁰ There are sound reasons for believing that Pennington's suspicions about the resources available were correct.

In 1629 a census of the mariner population of England and Wales recorded the existence of more than 13,500 seamen and fishermen.¹¹ However, not only were large areas omitted from the survey but men then at sea in privateers were also overlooked.¹² It therefore seems unlikely that the maritime population was much smaller than 20,000 men. Before the war years it was probably much higher. In 1628 one anonymous naval officer thought that manpower stocks had been depleted by a third since 1625.¹³ On the other hand, evidence adduced from the Cinque Ports suggests a much lower rate of loss. In 1623 returns from ten ports show that they could muster 815 mariners between them. The absence of returns for Rye, Walmer, Faversham and Folkestone means that the correct figure was probably nearer one thousand.¹⁴ By 1629 the population had been reduced to 892 men, a loss of perhaps just eleven per cent.¹⁵ In stark contrast to this modest decrease, however, the losses sustained by the West Country over the same period were probably huge. The spokesman of the parliamentary Committee on Trade, Sir

10 P.R.O., SP16/60/15, 11 April 1627, Pennington to Buckingham. For a discussion of the obstructionism of local officials, see below, pp.231-2.

11 P.R.O., SP16/155/31, SP16/283/120. The survey also included watermen.

12 In England, the counties omitted were Somerset, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Gloucestershire, Lancashire, Sussex. The returns for South Cornwall & Lincolnshire are also incomplete, & should be compared with returns submitted in 1626: SP16/33/70; SP16/33/129. The only Welsh counties included in 1629 were Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire & Cardiganshire. However, in 1626 it was stated that there were no seamen in Denbighshire, Merionethshire or Montgomeryshire: SP16/31/56.

13 Longleat, Coventry Papers, vol.117, fo.36v. Although undated, internal evidence suggests that this tract was written between the parliamentary sessions of 1628 & 1629.

14 P.R.O., SP14/140/64-9; SP14/142/24-5,39,52. Rye & Walmer submitted returns in 1626, however: Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2584 fos.382-4 (Rye); P.R.O., SP16/39/28.1 (Walmer).

15 P.R.O., SP16/283/120. This is Nicholas' copy of the 1629 national survey. The figures for the Cinque Ports in SP16/155/31 (the original book of returns) add up to only 869 men.

Dudley Digges, alleged in 1628 that 'where, in ten miles you might have raised 3 or 4,000 mariners, you cannot now find 500'.¹⁶ Digges appears not to have exaggerated. A survey conducted in 1619 found that there were 3,739 mariners in south Devon alone, yet in 1629 the recorded seafaring population of the whole county amounted to just 570 men.¹⁷

The end of the Spanish war in 1630, and the subsequent emergence of a lucrative carrying trade, probably allowed the mariner population to stage a recovery. No efforts to collate demographic information were made during the Personal Rule, but by 1635 the increase was undoubtedly substantial. Devon was told to provide more mariners for the First Ship Money Fleet than any other area outside London.¹⁸ As impressment quotas normally reflected the size of the community, this is clearly significant. A similar resurgence appears to have occurred in the Essex village of Barking. In 1629 the village was credited with only 122 fishermen, yet in 1635 the Admiralty received a petition from five hundred.¹⁹

If the mariner population was at its lowest ebb in 1629, it was still more than double the number of seamen the Navy required at the height of its activity between 1603 and 1642. Peak naval recruitment occurred in 1625, when about ten thousand mariners were forcibly enlisted.²⁰ This may have represented around one third of the mariner population at that time, but it was nevertheless substantially less than the Elizabethan mobilization of 1588, when virtually every able-bodied seaman was mobilized by the

16 *Commons Debates, 1628*, ed. R.C. Johnson & others (6 vols., New Haven, Conn. & London, 1977-83), iv. 91. Digges' words were reported, with slight differences, by more than one diarist: *ibid.*, pp.84,87,99.

17 Magdalene College, Cambridge, Pepsyian MS. 2212. I am grateful to Dr. Todd Gray for supplying me with the correct figure from the 1619 survey.

18 P.R.O., SP16/284/63, 11 March 1635, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

19 *C.S.P.D. 1635*, p.92.

20 P.R.O., E351/2263 says that 8,264 men received press money in 1625.

P.R.O., SP16/43/57 records wages paid to 10,773 men in 1625, but omits

Navy.²¹ After 1625 the numbers required were more modest. Royal shipping employed over 5,000 men in the summer of 1626, and over 6,000 men at the height of operational activity in 1627.²² During the Ship Money years, the Navy never recruited more than 4,500 men. On paper at least, the resources of England and Wales were easily greater than the Navy required in any one year. The days when the Navy needed more men than the merchant service employed were still in the future, and for this reason the manning difficulties experienced by the Georgian Navy in the 1760s were of a fundamentally different kind from those experienced under Charles I.²³ Moreover, contrary to what Professor Scammell has supposed, the Caroline Navy was theoretically better off for manpower than its Elizabethan predecessor.²⁴ In 1629 there were as many mariners in England at the end of a war as there were in 1582 before the start of a war. Simply on the

the crew of the *Phoenix* (100 men) which served in the Irish Sea. There are at least two reasons for the discrepancy between these documents. First, the men in pay include shipkeepers & officers' retainers, none of whom were entitled to receive press money. These may have amounted to 8 per cent of the whole. Secondly, many men were 'commanded' out of vessels at sea without apparently receiving press money: SP16/23/44, 21 March 1626, muster roll of the *Happy Entrance*.

- 21 Estimates of the size of the 1588 levy vary considerably, but see C. Lloyd, *The British Seaman*, p.31, for a discussion of the figures. See also *Commissions of Enquiry*, p.286. The figures should be compared with the 1582 maritime population census: P.R.O., SP12/156/45, (returns incomplete). Monson allows a higher number than were recorded in these returns, which suggests that he had access to others which have not survived: *Monson's Tracts*, iii. 188.
- 22 P.R.O., E351/2264, n.f., says that 5,325 men, including 200 carpenters & sawyers, received press money in 1626, but this probably understates the number of enlisted men (see above, n.21). P.R.O., SP16/43/57 puts the men receiving wages at 5,450. A note by Burrell dated 10 May 1627 reckoned that there were then 5,363 seamen receiving victuals: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS, C87/15). This number was undoubtedly swollen as the Ré fleet & the Elbe Guard were increased.
- 23 Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p.149.
- 24 G.V. Scammell, in 'Manning the English Merchant Service in the Sixteenth Century', (*Mariner's Mirror*, lxvi, 1970), p.134, is under the misapprehension that the 1629 returns (which he wrongly ascribes to 1628) are complete.

evidence of available resources, the Navy under Charles I ought to have had little difficulty in finding the seamen it needed to man its ships. The real problem lay in trying to procure the men that were known to be there, as Pennington's experience in 1627 graphically demonstrates. In this the Navy was hindered by a number of factors. Among the most important was the competition of foreign navies for the kingdom's mariners.

During the early seventeenth century England and Scotland were fertile sources of recruits for foreign states, especially the Dutch, who promised greater pay and rewards than the English Navy. In 1623 Capt. Chudleigh asked what he should do about all the English mariners that were serving in foreign vessels.²⁶ That same year Sir Henry Mainwaring reported that almost the entire forty-man crew of a Flushing privateer, including the captain, were English. In disgust he remarked that 'all men generally fly the king's service, & desier to putt them selves, for a littell more p[ro]fitt, under the p[ro]tecon of oth[er] princes', and he despaired of finding enough men to man the King's ships.²⁷ The Dutch, who were losing increasing numbers of their own seamen to Dunkirk and Ostend, poached British mariners on a large scale in 1628-9.²⁸ On encountering a fleet of Dutch vessels bound for the West Indies in 1629, Admiral Mervyn noted with astonishment that 'there shippes are mann'd w[ith] almost as many English Marriners as Natives'.²⁹ The beginnings of another exodus were detected by Kenrick Edisbury in 1634, who informed Nicholas that seamen were flocking to Dover for passage to France and Holland. If some course was not taken, he warned, 'wee shall have all our pryme men gone ymediatlie'.³⁰ One year later the magnitude of

26 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64800 fo.75, 18 Nov. 1623, Chudleigh to Coke.

27 P.R.O., SP14/142/50, 10 April 1623, Mainwaring to Calvert.

28 J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World* (Oxford, 1982), p.194.

29 P.R.O., SP16/149/78, 22 Sept. 1629, Mervyn to Admiralty.

30 P.R.O., SP16/262/82, 15 March 1634, Edisbury to Nicholas.

Dutch encroachments was revealed in a report compiled by the English ambassador at the Hague, Sir William Boswell, who stated that the seamen of the Dutch Navy 'are supposed to be a fift[h], sometymes a fourth part English and Scotch',³¹

It was not only the Dutch who poached British seamen. In the summer of 1625 Secretary Coke received the disquieting news that many Dunkirk warships contained 'diverse of our owne Runagates',³² This was hardly surprising, for the Dunkirkers promised wages four times higher than the Navy.³³ Even after the Navy's rates were increased in 1626, Dunkirker seamen could expect to be paid three times as much.³⁴ During the war years the problem was compounded by the Navy's inability to pay even the very low wages it offered. In October 1626 one newsletter writer reported that the Navy's seamen were so desperate for their pay that it 'hath made some hundreds to fly over sea to serve ye Dunkirk',³⁵ In March 1628 the diarist Walter Yonge recorded that around 200 seamen had left Portsmouth to serve the Archduchess, 'and 400 more would have gone if they could have gotten to sea',³⁶ These defections not only reduced the Navy's source of manpower, they also threatened the security of the kingdom. In 1630 the magistrates of Margate reported that the pilot of a captured man-of-war from Nieupoort was one Stephen Pearce, whom they described as a former member of Trinity House and therefore 'a dangerous Enemy to this State',³⁷

31 P.R.O., SP84/149 fos. 112v-113, 6/16 March 1635, Boswell to Coke.

32 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A455 fo.170, [Sept. 1625], Navy Commissioners to Coke.

33 P.R.O., SP16/12/102, Coke's notes on Dunkirk, 1625.

34 P.R.O., SP16/162/45,I, 5 March 1630, information of five Newcastle seamen. For the revised pay scale of 1626, see below, pp.212-3.

35 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 390 fo.146, 27 Oct. 1626, Mead to Stuteville.

36 *Diary of Walter Yonge Esq.*, ed. George Roberts (Camden Society,1848), p.112.

37 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 24113 fo.30v, 24 April 1630, Margate magistrates to Sir Edward Dering.

Flanders continued to attract large numbers of English volunteers after the ending of hostilities. In August 1631 the Privy Council received information from the Customs Farmer and former Navy Commissioner Sir John Wolstenholme that 200 English mariners had gone to serve the Archduchess.³⁸ Nine years later, in the aftermath of the Battle of the Downs, Northumberland informed the Council that foreign merchants were transporting English seamen to Spanish territories 'from whence...our men seldome or never returne againe', thereby creating 'a scarcity of Maryners both in his Ma[jes]t[ie]s service and merchants employments'.³⁹

The government's response to the mercenary problem was feeble. In August 1622 it issued a Proclamation condemning those mariners who had put themselves in foreign service without licence.⁴⁰ Lacking any means of implementation, this purely verbal prohibition yielded predictable results, and six months later the government issued another Proclamation stating that it would regard those who absconded as mere fugitives.⁴¹ It was not until February 1625 that the government took more positive action, when it ordered the removal of a large number of English mariners rumoured to be aboard some Dutch vessels anchored in Plymouth.⁴² However, during the subsequent war with Spain this policy was effectively reversed.

No further action was taken against the Dutch until 1634, when the government published an edict ordering all seamen in foreign pay to return

38 P.R.O., SP16/198/65, 26 Aug. 1631, Privy Council to Dorchester. One recruit was unfortunate to have been captured & interrogated a few months later. He insisted that he had gone to Dunkirk 'to get mayntenance to live' & that he was 'no papist'; K.A.O., Fa/AZ/41/1, 23 Nov. 1631, mayor & jurats of Faversham to [Dering].

39 P.R.O., SP16/470/22, 20 Oct. 1640.

40 *Stuart Royal Proclamations, Volume I: Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603-1625*, ed. James F. Larkin & Paul L. Hughes, (Oxford, 1973), pp.549-51.

41 *Ibid.*, pp.570-2.

42 *A.P.C. 1623-5*, p.486. This was followed shortly after by the reiteration of the 1622 & 1623 edicts; *Stuart Proclamations*, i, 634-6.

home.⁴³ Although this injunction was naïve, it was the necessary prerequisite for a systematic search of Dutch vessels entering English harbours. In April 1635 the Council ordered the authorities of twenty-three outlying ports to search all foreign shipping and to imprison any Englishmen found aboard.⁴⁴ However, if a high rate of retrieval was ever seriously anticipated, the results must have proved disappointing, for only forty-eight Englishmen were taken from Dutch vessels that year.⁴⁵ Moreover, there was no exodus of British mariners from the United Provinces in obedience to the 1634 Proclamation. Boswell put a favourable gloss on the matter when he observed that the majority of the Republic's British mariners were keen to return, but they could not afford the return fare because their wages were heavily in arrears.⁴⁶

As late as 1639 Northumberland regarded the mercenary problem as one of the Navy's most pressing concerns.⁴⁷ Yet, ironically, the Navy may actually have exacerbated its difficulties. The Master Attendant Peter White observed that many of the colliermen's apprentices ran away to serve foreign states because they had been maltreated by the Navy.⁴⁸ In a paper submitted to the King and the Admiralty in January 1636, Sir William Monson asserted that 'when people shall see themselves so sufficiently provided for, first in goodness of victuals and their pay to equal merchant voyages, this will be a means to keep them from thinking on foreign services, as now

43 *Stuart Royal Proclamations, Volume II; Royal Proclamations of King Charles I, 1625-1646*, ed. James F. Larkin, (Oxford, 1983), pp.418-20.

44 P.R.O., PC2/44 fo.244.

45 *Ibid.*, fos.302r-v,314. Ten more were caught by Pennington in Jan. 1636; N.M.M., JDD/1/2, p.142.

46 P.R.O., SP84/149 fos.114r-v.

47 Alnwick Castle MSS, vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.128, memo, misdated 1637.

48 P.R.O., SP16/336/76, n.d., [Nov./Dec. 1636], Capt. Carteret's deposition.

they do'.⁴⁹ The M.P. Sir Thomas Roe shared Monson's conviction that the Navy was largely to blame for driving large numbers of seamen abroad. However, he considered that 'noe encrease of wages or faire promises would draw the marriners to serve in the king's shippes', and he dismissed the idea that the Navy was poorly victualled. Instead, he argued that seamen preferred foreign service because the Navy expected more hard work and stricter discipline than they were used to.⁵⁰ Roe was no seaman, but his views partly mirrored those of the naval boatswain who claimed in 1608 that those who fled abroad did so because the Navy wore them out.⁵¹

The failure to solve the mercenary problem may also have stemmed from the fact that the issue was inevitably viewed primarily as a political rather than a naval question. During the war years of the 1620s, when the Dutch were in military alliance with the English, the matter of repossessing British seamen in Dutch service seems to have been quietly forgotten. Thus, a royal Proclamation issued in September 1625 was solely concerned with poaching by Flanders and Spain.⁵² By contrast, the Proclamations of 1622 and 1623 coincided suspiciously with the negotiations for a Spanish bride for Prince Charles. The 1634 Proclamation was issued against a backdrop which included a spate of incidents in the Channel between English and Dutch vessels over the sovereignty of the Narrow Seas. Moreover, as the King was about to conclude the First Maritime Treaty with Spain, he may have desired to impress on the Spanish the seriousness of his hostility towards the Republic.⁵³ When the Venetian Ambassador wrote to inform his

49 *Monson's Tracts*, iii, 382. In 1629 Mervyn blamed a lack of victuals for the defection of so many seamen to foreign states; P.R.O., SP16/149/92.

50 Brit. Lib., Harl. MS, 163 (diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes), fos.55v-6, speech of 16 April 1641. I am grateful to Prof. Russell for this reference.

51 *Commissions of Enquiry*, p.64.

52 *Stuart Proclamations*, ii, 59-61.

53 S.L. Adams, 'Spain or the Netherlands? The Dilemmas of Early Stuart

political masters of the edict, it did not occur to him to point out the consequences of Dutch poaching to the Navy. Rather, he observed that

those who seem best to understand the principles of this government consider that ill feeling between this nation and the Dutch, which never grows less, has had a great deal to do with this step, so as to deprive the Dutch, by a general law, of the advantages they derive from the countless sailors, subjects of this crown, who serve on their men of war and merchantmen.⁵⁴

The Venetian appears to have had his finger on the pulse, for Boswell told Coke that he did not believe that the Dutch

can easily, or suddenly (I had almost said possibly) find sufficient plenty of mariners & seamen to drive their trade and commerce by sea...or uphold their men of warre & navigation g[en]erally w[ith]th honour or advantage, without his Maj[est]ties subjects.⁵⁵

Clearly, both the Jacobean and Caroline regimes used proclamations to dish the Dutch, as did James II half a century later. From a naval viewpoint, this was decidedly unsatisfactory. It meant that the government's response to the problem of poaching was never simply determined by the Navy's needs.

Just as the Navy was forced to compete with foreign powers for its crews, so too it was obliged to vie with the very merchant marine which it was supposed to protect. However, it was poorly equipped to do so. One of the key issues was pay. In April 1626 the government introduced a revised pay scale which entitled ordinary naval seamen to a net wage of fourteen shillings a month.⁵⁶ This was duly represented as allowing mariners 'as much as they receive in Merchant wages', a claim which was believed in some quarters.⁵⁷ It seems unlikely that this was true. Professor Davis has

Foreign Policy', in *Before the English Civil War* ed. Howard Tomlinson (London, 1983), p.84.

54 C.S.P.V. 1632-6, p.288.

55 P.R.O., SP84/149 fo.114.

56 A.P.C. 1626, pp.248-51, 4 Sept. 1626; *Stuart Proclamations*, II. 96. Sea wages were based on the 'medium', which was the average pay of each member of the crew, including the officers. For an explanation of the medium, see McGowan, 'The Royal Navy', pp.111-2.

57 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 41616 fo.27 (Boteler, 1626/7); P.R.O., SP16/279/106 (Nathaniel Knott, 1634).

estimated that, for ten or twenty years after 1604, able merchant seamen could expect seventeen to eighteen shillings a month, a figure which rose to nineteen and twenty shillings in the 1630s.⁵⁸ It was not surprising, then, that a further wage rise for the Navy was discussed by the government in January 1635.⁵⁹ However, the Navy could never match the rates paid by the private sector. The Proclamation announcing the revised pay scale of 1626 anticipated its own shortcomings when it enjoined that 'no Merchants, or Owners of Ships, shall draw away any Saylers, by enhaunsing of their pay, lest therby His Majesties service...doe suffer prejudice'. Ten years later Sir Henry Palmer inferred that the government should regulate the wages paid by the private sector for he opined that the King would not get good mariners nor prevent desertion as long as merchants enticed men with large wages.⁶⁰ However, regulation was never a viable option.

During wartime the Navy's unattractive pay was a problem compounded by the prize money offered by privateers. The Elizabethan Navy had allowed its crews to keep whatever they could find 'above the deck' aboard vessels they captured, but this practice had evidently been abandoned by the early seventeenth century. However, the lure of prize money might have gone some way towards easing the Navy's manning difficulties. It would also have provided an incentive to fight, as Nathaniel Boteler explained, for without the promise of booty, it mattered little to ordinary seamen 'whether they take prizes or whether they take none'.⁶¹ The Navy Commissioners at least were alerted to this problem. In April 1626 they urged Buckingham to

58 Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London & New York, 1962), p.135.

59 P.R.O., PC2/44 fo.152. The notes of the Privy Council clerk, William Trumbull, survive for this month, but they shed no further light on the matter; Berkshire R.O., Trumbull Additional MSS., bundle 56.

60 P.R.O., SP16/317/49, 28 March 1636, Palmer to Admiralty.

61 *Boteler's Dialogues*, p.38.

promise the crew of a small frigate 'some small share out of such lawfull prizes...as they shall happen to gett' on the grounds that this would 'much hartten them in the se[r]vice',⁶² Appeals of this kind did make their impact. In October 1626 the Privy Council agreed in principle to pay 'a competent reward' to those who captured a prize, and in June 1627 Buckingham persuaded the Council to vote a reward of £600 to the ordinary seamen who had helped to bring in a large quantity of French prize ships earlier that year. However, prize money was too valuable as a source of war funds during the later 1620s for the government to set aside large amounts to reward the Navy's seamen. It was not until October 1642 that a fixed proportion of prize money was allocated to the captors.⁶³

The Navy's inability to compete with the private sector was probably of only marginal importance in the long run, for those men it could not induce to serve it would acquire through the press. The effects of impressment on the merchant community are difficult to gauge. One ship-owner who felt the pinch was Richard Lane. When in 1637 Lane accused the former master of one of his Newfoundland fishing vessels of having failed to provide a full crew, the master retorted that he 'doubted whether he could or not, by reason there was at that time a presse at dartmouth'.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Lane's vessel had evidently been left enough men to proceed on its voyage.

Merchants sometimes exaggerated the effects of the press. In 1635 the Newfoundland fishing baron Nicholas Pescod sought the release of twenty of his best men who had been pressed from two of his ships then preparing for

62 P.R.O., SP16/24/18, 3 April 1626. See also Brit. Libr., Add. MS, 64885 fo.95, 30 Nov. 1625, Navy Commissioners to Coke.

63 Oppenheim, *Administration of the Royal Navy*, pp.292-3; *A.P.C.* 1627, p.317.

64 P.R.O., HCA13/111, n.f., 15 April 1637 (Lane's charges), 18 May 1637 (the master's reply).

a voyage to the Newfoundland fisheries, and he grumbled that 'there is no mercy in these prestmasters when they are put in authoritie',⁶⁵ A somewhat different story was told by the supposedly merciless pressmaster concerned, however. Writing to his immediate superior about one of Pescod's crews, the pressmaster Edward Hayward observed

I conceive Mr Pescod of Hampton hath acquainted ye Lords that in respect 8 of his men were pressed, it was the overthrow of ye voyage, but wee conceav'd hee might well spare his Ma[ajes]tie soe manie out of threescore w[ith]out anie hinderance at all,

Hayward added that a fellow pressmaster had taken from other vessels only as many mariners 'as might well bee spared w[ith]out anie preiudice to ye Merchants, yet notwithstanding all o[ur] endeavours wee have not... pressed 100 seamen'. Indeed, he warned that no more mariners would be had 'unless the service require a staie of ye Merchants shipping till such time as the King is served',⁶⁶ What Pescod construed as rapacity, Hayward represented as irresponsible restraint.

Nevertheless, there were occasions when the Navy's officials acted quite ruthlessly in pressing seamen. This was particularly the case when a captain whose ships was about to put to sea discovered that his crew was insufficient. Writing to Sir John Coke from aboard the *Red Lion* in May 1625, Rear-Admiral Sir Francis Stewart observed that 'I founde men enoughe aboarde her, but most of them such as...there could not bee pickt 40 good men amongst them all that knowe howe to finde or handle a rope aright', for which reason he had discharged forty of the worst sort, they being 'some of them Tailors, some shoemakers, weavers, Comers of wooll, blaicksmithes, Turners, Tinckers, Husbandmen & the like'. In their stead he had taken

65 P.R.O., SP16/283/95, 28 Feb, 1635, Pescod to Uvedale.

66 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 9297 fo. 269v, 6 March 1635, Hayward to Edisbury.

seamen from the crews of passing ships.⁶⁷

This sort of behaviour was guaranteed to incense the merchant community. In a letter in 1626 to his cousin, Admiral John Pennington, the London merchant Isaac Pennington referred to the ruthlessness with which Stewart, and captains like him, stripped the crews of merchant vessels to meet their own manning needs. 'If this be suffered', he warned, 'both seamen & m[er]chaunts wilbe so discouraged as that all trading wilbe layd aside in tyme'. In Isaac's eyes, pressmasters who behaved in this fashion were demonstrating 'a bravadoe to shew their authoritie then for any necessitye'.⁶⁸ There was undoubtedly a grain of truth in this. Later the same year the captain of an armed merchantman in naval service observed that 'many meane, ill conditioned ffellows' had obtained press warrants from the Navy Commissioners and that, 'puft upp thereby w[ith] an opinion they had powre to binde and loose, [they] held it a glory to trample over...[the King's] poor subiects'.⁶⁹ Moreover, in 1635 two of the Principal Officers repined that

Though wee have often admonished the Capt[ain]s and M[aste]rs of his Ma[jes]t[ie]'s ships to be warie not to oppresse...the subiect by takeing more men out of the Newcastle and other ships...but where the necessity of his Ma[jes]t[ie]'s service requires it, yet we find many Complaints of that nature and not only soe, but that the Boatswaines Mates...doe...pull them most violently out of the ships in an uncivill manner, though many of the kings ships are then manned beyond their Complem[en]t.⁷⁰

However, on the whole, there may have been little justice in these allegations. The excessive zeal which was undoubtedly displayed by some naval officials in stripping vessels of their crews was galling, perhaps

67 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64883, fo.108, 30 May 1625.

68 P.R.O., SP16/22/95, 20 March 1626.

69 P.R.O., SP16/41/2, 1 Dec. 1626, Thomas Philpot to Nicholas.

70 P.R.O., SP16/289/26, 23 May 1635, Palmer & Edisbury to Admiralty. The Paymaster John Hollond shared their view; *Hollond's Discourses*, pp.20-1.

even tyrannous, but it was rarely unnecessary. Time and again land-based methods of impressment failed to yield sufficient numbers of mariners, forcing pressmasters to descend on shipping. The problem went beyond mere spite, because the exigencies of naval manning directly contradicted the needs of trade.

Yet it was seldom in the government's interest to condone the rapacious culling of the crews of outward-bound merchantmen. Not least significant was the fact that the King stood to lose customs revenue if pressmasters were given *carte blanche*, as Nicholas Pescod was at pains to point out.⁷¹ For this reason, a degree of protection for the crews of outward-bound merchantmen was built into the instructions of pressmasters. However, Buckingham's Admiralty regulations, which required pressmasters not to take 'above two out of any man's Barque, nor otherwise hindering the fishing or Trade more then necessitye shall require', clearly left it up to the pressmaster to decide what was necessary.⁷² It did not do to define limits too closely, and an instruction which seemed to deny latitude to the pressmaster was positively unhelpful. For instance, the Privy Council's instructions of March 1625 exempted the master, boatswain and boatmaster of Newfoundland fishing vessels from the press, but inferred that it was possible to meet both naval and fishing needs by taking such care for the rest of the crew 'that his Majestie being first served with able and sufficient men the fishing may alsoe proceede'.⁷³ The impossibility of always reconciling these twin objectives was evident to at least one pressmaster. Unwilling to lay himself open to the charge of needless rapacity, Portsmouth's Clerk of the Cheque, Matthew Brooke, wrote to Sir

71 P.R.O., SP16/285/5, 16 March 1635, Pescod to Nicholas.

72 Brit. Lib., Sloane MS, 3232 fo.164v.

73 A.P.C. 1623-5, p.500.

John Coke outlining a straightforward choice. Two hundred men were required from Hampshire, but many mariners were then out of his reach because they were in the West Country. This forced him to contemplate taking a quarter of the crewmen aboard eight vessels he had restrained from putting to sea, so that 'except yow please to lessen that number 40 or 50 men, their voyage must bee utterly overthrowen',⁷⁴

Brooke's dilemma shows that it was not always possible to spare the crews of outward-bound merchantmen from heavy impressment. Among those members of the maritime community who would sometimes have suffered the hardest were the deep sea fishermen, for it was inevitable that naval preparations often coincided with the beginning of the fishing season. Deep-sea fishermen were a valuable source of recruits for the Navy, because unlike coastal fishermen they were accustomed to handling ships rather than boats.⁷⁵ The Navy was frequently slow in sending its pressmasters to the fishing fleets, however. In May 1625 two bailiffs of Great Yarmouth informed the Privy Council that the local pressmaster had done his best to procure 250 mariners for the Navy, but stated that he could not get this number 'by reason that most of the seamen belonging to this Towne are nowe in their voyages'.⁷⁶ Four months later the Sussex J.P. Edward Alford travelled along the coast in the hope of procuring mariners for the King, but discovered that most of the local seamen had left for the North Sea fisheries a week earlier.⁷⁷ In 1635 the Navy Board's failure to despatch press warrants more promptly was alleged by Monson to have been the main reason why the First Ship Money Fleet was initially badly manned. 'If seamen be not taken at the

74 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64882 fo.146, 27 March 1625.

75 *Boteler's Dialogues*, pp.47-8.

76 P.R.O., SP16/2/82, 21 May 1625, John Trendell & Thomas Johnson to Privy Council.

77 P.R.O., SP16/521/178, 19 Sept. [1625], Alford to Privy Council.

beginning of March', Monson warned, 'by the middle thereof they are gone upon their voyages, and all England will not be able to furnish so many men as will man his Majesty's ships'.⁷⁸

The Navy's persistent failure to man its ships with adequate crew before they put to sea meant that inward-bound merchantmen had more to fear from the pressmaster than outward-bound vessels. Impressment of the crew of inward-bound ship was restricted only by the need to avoid taking more men than could be spared to bring the ship home safely.⁷⁹ During periods of large scale impressment many merchantmen avoided the Port of London altogether for fear of losing their crews. In April 1627 a number of merchant ships were reported to be loitering off the Essex coast, but the attempted evasion merely prompted Buckingham to order the despatch of two warships to Harwich with press warrants.⁸⁰ Nine years later the Navy's Victualler complained that fishing boats at Great Yarmouth were destined for France and Flanders, 'and none likelie to come for London by reason they are fearfull their men wilbe prest away, whilch would be the overthrowe of all theire som[m]lers fishinge'.⁸¹ Edisbury took the problem of evasion so seriously that in 1634 he urged the government to forbid London-bound shipping from discharging members of their crew before reaching Woolwich.⁸² The government's failure to do this could be interpreted as inertia, or it may suggest that Edisbury's fears were

78 *Monson's Tracts*, iii. 381. Monson claimed elsewhere that, of the men pressed for his ship between Great Yarmouth & Newcastle, 'never a man appeared...that had ever been at sea': *ibid.*, iv. 350-1.

79 For example, see Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.126, 20 June 1627, Buckingham to Pennington.

80 *Ibid.*, fo.71, 24 April 1627, Buckingham to Capt. Beverson & Capt. Greene.

81 P.R.O., SP16/319/47, 26 April 1636, John Crane to Admiralty.

82 P.R.O., SP16/265/20, 6 April 1634, 'Considerations on a proposed Proclamation', anon., but in Edisbury's hand.

exaggerated. After a muster of thirteen warships in Tilbury Hope in April 1636, which revealed crew shortfalls of between six and forty-nine per cent, Northumberland ordered his captains to press as many seamen as they needed from incoming merchantmen.⁸³ The efficacy of this expedient may be judged from the fact that the Earl wrote to Nicholas in early May mentioning only the undermanning of a few pinnaces, and this he believed he might soon remedy.⁸⁴ If the premature discharge of merchant seamen from London-bound vessels really was a serious problem, Northumberland's manning difficulties would have proved insoluble.

During the later 1620s the Navy's high demands on manpower threatened to undermine its own *raison d'être*. This was emphasised by the Bristol M.P. Robert Barker in June 1628, who told the Commons that his city was not desirous to have the protection of the King's ships because there are 'such unusual presses that they oppress us'. Bristol had been subject to the press almost constantly since the commencement of hostilities, he said, a remedy to the enemy's disruption of trade which was worse than the disease.⁸⁵ The issue of an open-ended press warrant to the captain of the warship in the Bristol Channel in April 1627, and the observation of one naval carpenter that the drain on Bristol was so acute 'in Regard ther[e] was so few men had from other parts', lend credence to Barker's claim.⁸⁶

Bristol was not alone in asserting during the war years that the Navy was the greatest enemy to trade. In 1627 the inhabitants of Poole submitted to the Privy Council a list of its lost seamen which they had formulated in

83 P.R.O., SP16/319/47, muster, 21 April 1636; SP16/321/65, 20 May 1636, Northumberland to Admiralty.

84 P.R.O., SP16/320/43, 7 May 1636, Northumberland to Nicholas.

85 *Commons Debates, 1628*, iv. 209. The diarist's report of Barker's words is slightly muddled.

86 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.71v, Buckingham to Capt. Fogg, 24 April 1627; P.R.O., SP16/82/24, 18 Oct. 1627, Bowrey to Burrell.

1626. One hundred and eighty-seven had been lost since the outbreak of the war, of whom no less than 122 had been taken by the press. Of these, fifty were either dead or missing.⁸⁷ In March 1627 the Cinque Ports sought the mitigation of a press of 200 men because of the impact this would have on their fishing industry, a plea which was supported by the Lieutenant of Dover Castle, Sir John Hippisley.⁸⁸ Buckingham refused the request, however, and the following year the Privy Council ordered the Ports to furnish another 150 men.⁸⁹ This time there was no official protestation, but Nicholas' endorsement of the letter written by Lt. Legatt, who received the pressed men at Deal, suggests that Hippisley took the matter into his own hands. 'Never', wrote Legatt, 'was service so abused, for these men they send are such who for spitte [sic] ar prest...for some of them ar sadlers, some plowmen and maltmen; very few able men'.⁹⁰ If Hippisley really was behind this, then it shows that even the most ardent of Buckingham's supporters would draw the line somewhere to protect trade.

The Privy Council or the Admiralty sometimes exempted particular mariners from impressment by issuing warrants of protection. The most likely beneficiaries were vessels engaged in the King's business, such as the ships hired to ferry stone from the Isle of Portland to London for the repair of St. Paul's Cathedral in the mid-1630s, or those employed in

87 P.R.O., SP16/51/55-6.

88 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37819 fo.41v, 22 March 1627, Buckingham to Hippisley; H.M.C., *13th Rept.*, app., pt. iv. (Rye Corporation MSS.), p.183, 24 March 1627, mayor & jurats of Dover to mayor & jurats of Rye; P.R.O., SP16/58/62, 30 March 1627, Hippisley to Nicholas; SP16/70/8-9, 2 July 1627, Cinque Ports to the King & Buckingham.

89 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37819 fo.42, 28 March 1627, Buckingham to Hippisley. See also K.A.O., CPz/3, 30 March 1627, ticket naming 10 men pressed in Faversham. For the 1628 levy, see *A.P.C. 1628-9*, p.20.

90 P.R.O., SP16/110/63, 23 July 1628, Legatt to Nicholas. Nicholas' endorsement reads 'Hippisley's neglect in pressing 150 sailors'.

transporting naval stores.⁹¹ The merchantman which procured a letter of protection from the Council or from the Admiralty was rare. In November and December 1625 the Council issued protections for six ships bound for Virginia, which has prompted one historian to declare that the government was 'always prepared to grant immunity from the press under the proper circumstances, no matter how great the navy's need'.⁹² In fact, these were virtually the sole exemptions granted during the war years; the only other grant of any consequence was issued to the Earl of Warwick's privateers in April 1627.⁹³ The Admiralty Commissioners appear to have been almost as sparing in the Ship Money years. In 1637 they freed the crews of just nine outward-bound merchantmen from the press, totalling 227 men and boys, a number too small to have seriously compromised the Navy's requirements.⁹⁴

Nonetheless, the issue of letters of protection became a bone of contention in 1636. In addition to those issued by the Admiralty, the Navy Board distributed its own protections and these made it virtually

91 P.R.O., PC2/44 fos.246-7, 3 April 1635, (4 ships carrying stone); Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.1, 1 Feb. 1636, Principal Officers to captains & pressmasters (ship carrying naval stores). In 1628 the Ordnance Office issued its own protection to a ship carrying munitions to the Isle of Wight; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fos.36v,50. Ships carrying ambassadors were also protected; see Brit. Libr. Add. MS. 37816 fo.33, 14 July 1626, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners. Two ships bought in London to form part of an independent Scottish naval squadron were also ordered to be protected in July 1626; *ibid.*, fo.129v, 4 July 1626, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners.

92 *A.P.C. 1625-6*, pp.235,271; McGowan, 'The Royal Navy', pp.130-1.

93 Warwick's grant has not survived, but see P.R.O., SP16/60/18, & Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.57. Three ships bound for the West Indies were ordered to be protected in 1626; *A.P.C. 1626*, p.68; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fos.164v,166. One other trading ship, the *St. Anne*, was ordered to be protected that year, but as she was owned by the King this was not surprising; *ibid.*, fo.183.

94 P.R.O., SP16/353 fos.6,7v,8,12v-13,23v,27v,28. In addition, Northumberland freed the 6-man crew of a small vessel carrying wine for the Earl of Holland; Brit. Libr., Egerton MS. 2553 fo.3v, 13 March 1637, Northumberland to customs officers & pressmasters.

impossible to procure the number of mariners required.⁹⁵ The Board's right to do this is unclear, but the showering of exemptions did nothing to ameliorate the shortage of seamen in the weeks preceding the sailing of the Second Ship Money Fleet. Northumberland subsequently ordered his officers to ignore all protections not issued by the Admiralty. This led to a fiery exchange between Sir William Russell and Capt. Richard Fielding, but the Earl justified himself and Fielding by saying that, 'had I not taken this course I do not believe that our ships would have been man[n]ed before Michellmas'.⁹⁶ If nothing else, the incident taught Inigo Jones, who was responsible for rebuilding St. Paul's, to ensure that the mariners employed by him got a protection which carried the Admiralty seal in future.⁹⁷

Limited protection from impressment was, in theory at least, enjoyed by the Cinque Ports, which lay outside the jurisdiction of the Lord High Admiral. Although the Ports could be obliged to provide seamen for the Navy, no pressmaster was entitled to operate within their bounds without the authorisation of the Lord Warden's officers. Moreover, no portsman was liable to impressment outside the Ports themselves.⁹⁸ In practice, however, these privileges were more honoured in the breach than in the observance. During the early 1620s the Lord Warden, Lord Zouch, wrote numerous letters of complaint demanding the release of portsmen who had been pressed in and around London.⁹⁹ In the case of one Richard Helland, who was pressed in

95 P.R.O., SP16/352/51, 10 April 1637, Richard Pulley to Nicholas.

96 P.R.O., SP16/321/65, 20 May 1636, Northumberland to Admiralty. Northumberland may not have been above reproach himself, for he evidently issued his own letter of protection to the 21-man crew of a London ship on 1 April; Brit. Lib., Egerton MS. 2553 fo.4.

97 P.R.O., SP16/352/57, 11 April 1637, Inigo Jones to Laud.

98 P.R.O., SP12/237 fos.16r-v, notes by Nicholas [1626].

99 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 37818 fos.65v,67v,74v,76. See also P.R.O., SP14/127/53,73 (2 petitions from Dover).

August 1620, he apparently had some success.¹⁰⁰ However, the Navy could not always afford to be so sensitive to the Ports' privileges. Writing a few weeks after Helland's release, Admiral Sir Robert Mansell politely but firmly declined to release a further three portsmen as his manning needs were acute and his orders were to sail immediately.¹⁰¹ Not everyone was as apologetic as Mansell. In July 1629 William Stevenson, master of the *Dreadnought*, pressed a seaman in Sandwich without requesting authority from the Lieutenant of Dover Castle. When Stevenson was informed of his omission by the local authorities, 'he answered in most opprobrious termes that hee would first see dover Castle suncke in the sea'.¹⁰²

Only the mariners of the Isle of Wight were theoretically free from the press. This was 'in regard they are to be alwayes in readines upon any suddaine alarum or necessitie for the defence of the said Isle'.¹⁰³ However, the island's privilege was breached in March 1625 by the Privy Council.¹⁰⁴ Yet it was not until August 1626, following the impressment of sixteen of the island's seamen, that a complaint was lodged.¹⁰⁵ Faced with a threatened Spanish invasion, the Privy Council's response was typical of the reaction of a government forced to choose between the liberties of the subject and the demands of war. Thus, Conway, the Lord Lieutenant was told that, although care had been taken to spare the island's mariners, 'if his

100 Brit. Lib., Egerton MS, 2584 fo.262r-v, 24 Aug. 1620, Zouch to [Mansell?], & Helland's petition; Brit. Lib., Add. MS, 37818 fo.46, 2 Sept. 1620, Zouch to Mansell.

101 Brit. Lib., Egerton MS, 2584 fo.272, 16 Sept. 1620, Mansell to Zouch. The previous month Zouch had pressed a number of portsmen, only to order their release & a fresh press made; K.A.O., CPM/34, 4 Aug. 1620, Zouch to mayor & jurats of New Romney.

102 Brit. Lib., Add. MS, 24113 fo.9v, 6 July 1629, mayor & jurats of Sandwich to Dering.

103 A.P.C. 1630-1, p.408, 29 June 1631. This Privy Council order said that Hampshire should also be exempt from the press.

104 A.P.C. 1623-5, p.499.

105 P.R.O., SP16/33/3, 1 Aug. 1626, Anthony Ersfield to Conway.

Majesty's fleete cannot bee otherwise provided, wee doubt not but that they will have patience in a more pressing [sic] occasion of necessitie',¹⁰⁶

Yet the government did its best to shield the merchant marine from the full blast of impressment. One way it did this was by classifying the large number of London watermen as mariners. Nathaniel Boteler at least approved of this, for 'the very rowing in our wherries between London Bridge and Westminster maketh expert oarsmen, and this is one step (though the lowest) towards the attainment of this mystery [of seamanship]'.¹⁰⁷ From the outset of Charles I's reign, the Navy relied heavily on the watermen to help man its ships. On the recommendation of Deptford's Trinity House, one sixth of the fleet's sailors in 1625 consisted of watermen.¹⁰⁸ An even higher proportion may have helped to man the Ré fleet. Of the 1,350 seamen needed to crew six ships at Chatham, no less than 300 were ordered to be drawn from Waterman's Hall.¹⁰⁹

The use of large numbers of watermen to help man the Navy's ships was generally unpopular. In 1628 one writer ascribed the large number of ignorant seamen to the pressing of watermen.¹¹⁰ Two years earlier Lord Willoughby's captains had endeavoured to rid themselves of the watermen aboard their ships.¹¹¹ They did not succeed, unlike the captains and

106 *A.P.C.*, 1626, p.195. Press warrants were subsequently issued to the island in 1627-8; *A.P.C.*, 1627, p.500; *A.P.C.*, 1627-8, pp.53-4.

107 *Boteler's Discourses*, p.47. Boteler had changed his tune since 1626/7 (he was writing in the 1630s); Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 41616 fo.26.

108 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C160/19), 29 April 1625, Trinity House to [Navy Commissioners]; Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A455 fo.167, (n.d., but written sometime after 4 June 1625) Navy Commissioners to masters of the King's Barges. A muster of the crew of the *Vanguard* taken in Sept. 1626 suggests that the ratio of watermen to seamen remained at this level; P.R.O., SP16/36/10.

109 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64891 fo.40, 16 April 1627, Downing to Coke.

110 Longleat, Coventry Papers, vol.117 fo.37.

111 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64889 fo.151, 30 Sept. 1626, Sir George Chudleigh to Coke.

masters of the First Ship Money Fleet, who replaced their watermen with seamen taken from passing vessels 'which they call better men',¹¹² In the same vein, the captain who assisted a stricken English East Indiaman in December 1626 did so by turning over twenty of his ship's watermen.¹¹³

The most outspoken critic of watermen was Monson. In a paper presented to the King and the Admiralty in January 1636, he deplored the large number that had been employed in the First Ship Money Fleet. 'I account watermen (unless it be those which have used the sea)', he wrote, 'the worst of all others to be carried to sea'. Nevertheless, he realised that the government would not, or could not, dispense with them entirely. He therefore suggested that in future they should form no more than five per cent of the fleet's seamen. Even this he conceded grudgingly, being 'rather to nourish and breed such likely men for the King's future service than for anything they can do in their first voyage'.¹¹⁴ However, 480 watermen were subsequently pressed for the Second Ship Money Fleet, representing over ten per cent of its strength.¹¹⁵ This was an improvement on the one-sixth hitherto required, but it was still twice the number propounded by Monson.

Despite the widespread hostility to the use of watermen as seamen, naval manning needs fully justified their impressment. Not only was the merchant marine thereby shielded from the full force of the press, it was also the case that early seventeenth century warships did not require crews entirely composed of trained seamen to function properly. A naval vessel crewed by 250 men employed fifty men as permanent musketeers.¹¹⁶ This was more than enough to have absorbed the Navy's intake of watermen. However, most

112 P.R.O., SP16/289/26, 23 May 1635, Palmer & Edisbury to Admiralty.

113 P.R.O., SP16/41/11, 2 Dec. 1626, Watts to Buckingham.

114 *Monson's Tracts*, iii, 381.

115 P.R.O., E351/2276, n.f.

116 P.R.O., SP16/279/27, anon., n.d., dispositions of a 250 man crew in a 40-gun ship.

contemporaries tended to think exclusively in terms of trained seamen. Admiral Watts was evidently saying something new in 1627 when he suggested that the King's ships should recruit '20 or 15 landmen in the hundred', who would 'serve for musquetiers in theire first voyage & helpe to do all heavy labour upon the deckes',¹¹⁷ A similar idea was put forward by Lord Deputy Wentworth in 1634, but it was dismissed by the Navy Board on the grounds that landsmen lacked sea-legs and would squabble with the seamen.¹¹⁸

Captains who complained about the number of landsmen or watermen aboard their ships were not always acting unreasonably. However, there was a considerable difference between ships which were short of skilled seamen, and those which merely included a percentage of untrained hands. The enormous expansion of the Navy which occurred in the 1640s and 1650s placed such a burden on the seafaring population that the Navy was forced to rethink its attitude towards landsmen. Thus, during the First Anglo-Dutch War, it was common for a third of a ship's crew to be composed of soldiers. This was disagreeable to the fleet's commanders, but the Navy's performance against the Dutch hardly suggests that it suffered as a result.¹¹⁹

In theory, the Caroline Navy's requirement to press watermen never extended to landsmen, for pressmasters were specifically enjoined to press only mariners. Indeed, the guiding principle in the selection of pressmasters was that they should be able to distinguish seamen from landsmen.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, it was not unusual for captains to discover large numbers of

117 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A192, treatise by Sir John Watts, n.d., (but probably 1627/8), p.18.

118 C.S.P.I. 1633-47, pp.84-5, [3 Nov.] 1634, Wentworth to Admiralty; P.R.O., SP16/278/30, 10 Dec. 1634, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

119 Capp, *Cromwell's Navy*, p.273. During the Seven Years' War it was taken for granted that the recruitment of landsmen was essential; Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp.149-50, 155-6.

120 P.R.O., SP16/13/61, n.d., orders to be observed aboard the King's ships.

landsmen among their crews. Monson complained that the fleet in 1635 included 'tailors, porters, and others of that rank',¹²¹ In 1636 Capt. Carteret grumbled that a third of his crew of 150 men had never been to sea before, and that only twelve (excluding the officers) could take the helm. He assumed, probably rightly, that the fault lay with the pressmasters.¹²²

There was undoubtedly some truth in the popular proverb that the pressmaster 'carrieth the able men in his pocket', for it was both lucrative and easy to allow men who had been pressed to buy their release. Sir Henry Mainwaring told Lord Zouch in 1623 that he might have made £200 in this way.¹²³ In 1636 Capt. William Rainsborough declared that 'I myself, being once a pressmaster for Dorsetshire, had six pieces put into my hand by a man to clear him'. Rainsborough professed to be above such temptation however, adding that 'I made him serve, and I was extraordinarily railed at because I would not clear men for money'.¹²⁴ Other pressmasters may not have been so scrupulous. No less than forty-four of 139 men discharged as unfit by Northumberland in 1636 were pressed by boatswains Benjamin Woolner and Henry Hubbard, who had acted together.¹²⁵ There is no direct evidence that they accepted bribes, but financial difficulties later induced Woolner to attempt to pawn naval stores, for which he was sequestered.¹²⁶

Pressmasters were sometimes the objects of unjustified criticism. In 1625 Sir James Bagg defended himself against allegations that he had not pressed seamen. 'Such men as wee take were the best', he affirmed, 'only lett me advise that there owne reports carry no creditt, for they will, in hope to

121 *Monson's Tracts*, iv, 150.

122 P.R.O., SP16/336/76.

123 P.R.O., SP14/142/49, 9 April 1623.

124 P.R.O., SP16/337/1, 1 Dec. 1636, deposition. Rainsborough served as pressmaster for Dorset in 1625; Bodl. Libr., Rawl. A455 fo.165v.

125 P.R.O., SP16/317/104, list of discharged men, March 1636.

126 P.R.O., SP16/335/25, 7 Nov. 1636, Nicholas' Admiralty notes.

avoyde the service, disparage themselves',¹²⁷ One man who would have concurred with these sentiments was the pressmaster Hugh Watkin. At Dartmouth in 1623 Watkin had pressed 'mechanicall men and husbandmen', but as he pointed out, there were 'very few maryners in these parts but,...in the winter tyme imploy themselves in the divers labours of the countrie'.¹²⁸ In Devon at least, farming and fishing were not mutually exclusive. In fact there were good pressmasters as well as bad ones. Gloucestershire's Vice-Admiral praised Thomas Barton in 1639 because he 'would not release any man that was likely to p[er]form the service', though he added that if men like him had been employed earlier, 'I am persuaded the service would have been better p[er]formed'.¹²⁹

Criticism of pressmasters inevitably reflected on the judgement of those who had selected them. Northumberland was clearly referring to the Principal Officers in 1636 when he remarked that 'the making mean prestmasters doth occasion abuses'.¹³⁰ The Officers retorted that they only employed experienced seamen, which was true; Henry Hubbard had been a naval boatswain since at least 1625, while Benjamin Woolner had served in the same capacity for almost as long.¹³¹ In the absence of a detailed knowledge of the character and financial condition of its warrant officers, the Officers could scarcely have been expected to select men more suitable. However, the Officers were as appalled as Northumberland at the widespread

127 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.44, 6 May 1625, Bagg to Navy Commissioners.

128 Devon Record Office, DD62093, 1 Sept. 1623, Watkin to [Rutland?], printed in *Devon Notes and Queries*, vol.14, (1926-7), pp.178-9. I am grateful to Dr. Todd Gray for this reference.

129 P.R.O., SP16/414/52, 7 March 1639, Sir William Guise to Nicholas.

130 P.R.O., SP16/338/39, n.d., abstract of charges & depositions.

131 P.R.O., E351/2264, n.f., (Woolner, spelt 'Walnot'); P.R.O., SP14/182/29, 22 Jan. 1625, list of shipkeepers (Hubbard, spelt 'Hubbert').

abuses of pressmasters.¹³² Hence they suggested an alternative system which they hoped would free them from future criticism. This was that the Navy's captains, who were the first to complain, should be permitted to press their own men.¹³³ However, neither the Admiralty nor Northumberland were prepared to countenance this idea.

The Officers' proposal was set aside in favour of a scheme put forward by Northumberland's flag captain, William Rainsborough. Rainsborough sought to abandon the Navy's control of impressment by placing it in the hands of the local magistracy and the vice-admirals of the maritime shires, who were not naval officers but Admiralty officials.¹³⁴ This idea was not new, for an identical system had been instituted in 1620 by the Privy Council to man the expeditionary fleet to Algiers. Like Rainsborough's proposal, it had sought to avoid the 'oppression, abuse and corruption as hath heretofore befe[n] practized by ordinary presters'.¹³⁵ This system had later been abandoned, but during the war years of the 1620s civilian and Admiralty officials such as Sir James Bagg were sometimes called upon to press mariners for the Navy.¹³⁶ It may have been because of these precedents that Rainsborough's scheme was endorsed by the King and the Admiralty in March 1637. The Principal Officers were duly absolved of all responsibility for the press, beyond furnishing the necessary press and conduct money.

132 P.R.O., SP16/317/49, 28 March 1636, Palmer to Admiralty.

133 P.R.O., SP16/345/44, 30 Jan. 1637, Officers to Admiralty. The proposal was echoed by Nathaniel Boteler, who argued that it was unjust for a captain to be held responsible for all the failings of his men while he was barred from their selection; *Boteler's Dialogues*, pp.9-10.

134 P.R.O., SP16/337/1, 1 Dec. 1636, Rainsborough to Northumberland.

135 *A.P.C. 1619-21*, pp.247-50.

136 Bagg himself issued deputations to the mayor of Dartmouth & other magistrates; see Bodl. Libr., Rawl. MS. A210 fos.11,16,27. Coke sent warrants to the mayors of Poole, Weymouth, Southampton & Chichester, & to the deputy-lieutenants & J.P.s of Hampshire & the Isle of Wight, in June 1628; P.R.O., SP16/106/32; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64895 fos.111,114.

Yet the new system appears not to have been implemented. Pressmasters employed by the Navy Board are known to have operated in Essex and Dorset in 1637, although they also appear to have worked in close liaison with the shire vice-admirals.¹³⁷ In 1638 the Principal Officers, who were only too keen to rid themselves of the invidious task of impressment, declared their support for Rainsborough's scheme, but in such a way as to make it clear that it had not yet been put into practice.¹³⁸ Their letter went unheeded, for in the following month the Officers noted that they had despatched pressmasters to the maritime counties.¹³⁹ Although press warrants were apparently issued to vice-admirals in March 1639, the Navy Board continued to appoint pressmasters.¹⁴⁰

It is not clear why the Admiralty had second thoughts about employing the assistance of the civilian magistracy. The most likely explanation, however, is that it was realised that many local magistrates had a vested interest in the smooth running of trade, and would inevitably connive with seamen to thwart the press. In 1626 Pennington had fumed that the mayor of Dartmouth 'is so farre from giving ayde to the press that he frees and takes the men from them after they have prest them'.¹⁴¹ Captain Chudleigh of the *Bonaventure* complained in 1627 that the mayor of Sandwich 'hath played ye Jake wilth mee aboute pressing of men. I put a man in to his custody and he let hime slipe willfully'.¹⁴² In 1628 Weymouth's mayor announced a week-long postponement of the press without first consulting

137 P.R.O., SP16/351/49, 31 March 1637, John Phillips & Thomas Lewis to Edisbury; SP16/352/51, 10 April 1637, Richard Pulley to Nicholas.

138 P.R.O., SP16/381/51, 8 Feb. 1638.

139 P.R.O., SP16/385/10, 2 March 1638, Officers to Admiralty.

140 Bodl Libr., MS. Firth c.4 (Essex Lieutenancy book, 1608-39) p.624; P.R.O., SP16/414/52, 7 March 1639, Sir Wm. Guise to Nicholas.

141 P.R.O., SP16/21/33, 18 Feb. 1626, Pennington to Buckingham.

142 P.R.O., SP16/82/5.I, 16 Oct. 1627, Chudleigh to Hippisley.

the pressmaster.¹⁴³ Similar underhand dealing was encountered that year by Capt. Philip Hill, who accused the High Constable of Roborough Hundred, William Tapsum, of thwarting his efforts to press mariners, for when Hill conducted a search it appeared 'that there was notice given, and it could come from none but the high constable'.¹⁴⁴ Tapsum was subsequently brought before the Privy Council, but he was released without punishment.¹⁴⁵ This did not mean that he was innocent, however, for it is probably significant that he was the owner of a flyboat and the part-owner of a privateer.¹⁴⁶

Connivance between local officials and mariners to defeat the press was not restricted to the war years. In 1635 the King's Lynn J.P., Thomas Milner, responded to the entreaties of a merchant by substituting a Glover for a pressed seaman, and this was by no means the only substitution of which he was guilty.¹⁴⁷ The mayor of Liverpool was involved in similar dealings the following year, while in 1637 the deputy Vice-Admiral of Essex accused the Corporations of Colchester and Harwich of deliberately impeding the press.¹⁴⁸ Whatever the short-comings of the Navy's own pressmasters, it would have been absurd to have entrusted the Navy's supply of mariners to important maritime civilians such as these.

The obstructionism of local officials, and the corruption of press-

143 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64897 fo.68, 12 Aug. 1628, Capt. Greene to Coke.

144 P.R.O., SP16/96/53.I, [March 1628] Hill & William Coryton to Denbigh; SP16/100/11, 1 April 1628, deposition of Hill, Coryton & 5 others.

145 A.P.C. 1627-8, pp.358,376-7,382. He was forced to pay £12 in messenger's fees, however: *Commons' Debates*, iii. 421,426.

146 P.R.O., SP16/34/98, a Wm 'Tapson' owner of a flyboat; C.S.P.D. 1628-9, p.440, Wm 'Topson' part-owner of a privateer.

147 P.R.O., SP16/288/67, 11 May 1635, examination of 3 crewmen of the *James*; SP16/289/1,1.I, 17 May 1635, Palmer to Nicholas. Milner was summoned by the Admiralty & released after apologising: SP16/289/74, 30 May 1635, Admiralty notes; SP16/289/78, 30 May 1635, Officers to Admiralty; SP16/475 fo.388v, 1 June 1635, Admiralty meeting.

148 P.R.O., SP16/317/75, 29 March 1636, examination of 4 men; SP16/352/51, 10 April 1637, Pulley to Nicholas.

masters, worked against an efficient, land-based system of impressment. However, perhaps the most staggering deficiency in the Navy's machinery for procuring mariners was the general lack of any provision of conductors to see pressed men to the yards.¹⁴⁹ Although each mariner received conduct money in addition to the one shilling paid to him on his impressment, the pressmaster's responsibility for the men he selected ended after he required them, 'uppon their alleagance', to appear before the Clerk of the Cheque at the appropriate dockyard.¹⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, many mariners simply absconded with the money. In 1628 Denbigh informed Buckingham that every sixth man pressed had failed to appear, and if there is any thing startling about this it is that the figure is so low.¹⁵¹ Trinity House considered it usual for only two or three hundred men to appear of every five hundred who were pressed.¹⁵²

Conductors were regularly provided to escort newly recruited soldiers to their assembly points during the war years. In the mid-eighteenth century the Navy not only provided conductors, it even insisted on handcuffing many new recruits to wagons.¹⁵³ Yet, in the 1620s, the Navy was slow to realise the need for such a system. As late as April 1628 Devon's J.P.s thought it necessary to state that it would assist the Navy's pressmasters provided that 'some other authorised for that purpose be sent to convey those who shall be prest'.¹⁵⁴ It may not have been until the summer of that year that

149 One undated set of instructions, P.R.O., SP16/119/69, required conductors to be appointed by 'the Lieutenant of ye Shire'. However, the Admiralty had no authority to enlist the aid of the Lieutenancy except through the Privy Council, & there is no evidence that it ever did.

150 P.R.O., SP16/337/69.I, 5 Oct. 1636, William Brissenden's press warrant.

151 P.R.O., SP16/100/56, 8 April 1628.

152 *T.H.D.T.*, no.463, p.138, n.d. [1634?].

153 Rodger, *Wooden World* pp.173-4.

154 Devon Record Office, DQS OB (1625-33), p.161. I am grateful to Dr. Todd Gray for this reference, & for furnishing me with a transcript.

Buckingham first enjoined the Navy's pressmasters to escort new recruits to their ships.¹⁵⁵ After the Duke's death, the Navy reverted to the old system. It was only after he guessed that many of the men he had pressed intended to neglect the service that in 1635 Edward Hayward requested that the mayors of Poole and Weymouth be instructed to search for the absentees, '& to apprehend them as delinquents, & send them from constable to constable till they come to Portsmouth'.¹⁵⁴ During the war years few men seem to have grasped what was needed. One who did was Sir Henry Mainwaring. In April 1627 he urged Buckingham to press a large number of watermen in their Hall, and suggested that they should be taken immediately to the Gravesend barge for transport to the fleet.¹⁵⁵

It seems remarkable that such advice was necessary. It was no wonder that land-based methods of impressment constantly failed to meet naval manning needs, forcing captains to strip merchantmen of their crews. What is most striking about this flawed system is not that the Navy time and again failed to acquire sufficient numbers of mariners on dry land, but that the machinery available proved capable of yielding any at all.

The lack of a system of conduct was only one of a number of serious drawbacks to the Caroline impressment system. The popular image of naval recruitment in the age of sail is of the press-gang roaming the streets of

155 P.R.O., SP16/111/61, an undated warrant signed by Buckingham, required the recipient to press men for the *Tenth Whelp*, then at Shoreham, and 'carefully to send them in safe custody...aboard her'. The *Tenth Whelp* was at Shoreham in June 1628, where she was built: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.120, 4 June 1628, Buckingham to Principal Officers.

156 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.271, 13 March 1635, Hayward to Edisbury. Matthew Brooke had made the same suggestion ten years earlier: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64882 fo.146, 27 March 1625, Matthew Brooke to Coke.

157 P.R.O., SP16/61/22, 24 April 1627. It may not have been uncommon for seamen who had travelled unattended to the yards to have been transported to their ships: P.R.O., E351/2264, n.f., payment to Nicholas Bateman, Jan. 1626, for the hire of 2 tiltboats to carry seamen to Tilbury Hope.

maritime towns, using dubious coercive methods to meet manning needs. Yet this is a largely inappropriate image for the early seventeenth century. Under Charles I pressmasters ashore usually operated singly or in pairs. However, the acute shortage of seamen in Denbigh's fleet in 1628 probably explains why Capt. Philip Hill descended on Roborough Hundred with his ship's master, boatswain, two mates and a servant.¹⁵⁸

The probable logic behind the usual absence of a group of supportive toughs was that they were not needed. In theory, the pressmaster heralded his arrival in a maritime district by writing in advance to the chief magistrate, who gathered together the local mariners by using the parish constables. The pressmaster then selected the men he wanted and distributed press and conduct money. However, since the local magistracy was not generally the natural ally of the press, many pressmasters must have found themselves effectively operating alone and therefore vulnerable to assault. In 1637 a boatswain went alone to Shadwell and pressed William Burnett in the house of one Richard Cooper. However, Cooper said that 'he would kick the Boatswain or any other man [who] should come to presse men in his house', and tried to allow Burnett to escape. When the boatswain caught hold of Burnett, he was 'by him stroken on the face', at which the boatswain called Cooper to assist him

but contrariwise he..gave..Burnett encouragement to resist, so as the said Burnett demanding the Boatswain's warr[an]t first tore it, & then throwing it & the presse money away, said now shew yo[u]r warrant, & so fell upon the Boatswain, tore his Band & other wise abused him.¹⁵⁹

In 1629 the gunner's mate of the *Assurance*, Richard Simpson, was wounded by

158 P.R.O., SP16/100/11. Hill's colleague, Capt. William Cooke, was accompanied by his master & 2 other men: SP16/100/40.

159 P.R.O., SP16/354/81, received 24 April 1637, Thomas Bredcake to Nicholas.

three mariners in an alehouse.¹⁶⁰ No less a person than Henry Russell, one of the Rulers of the Watermen's Company, complained in 1641 that he had been hit with a scull by a waterman he had unsuccessfully tried to press.¹⁶¹ Such attacks were probably infrequent, but when they occurred they underlined the vulnerability of the pressmaster. The press-gangs of a later era were no guarantee of the pressmaster's personal safety, but they nonetheless facilitated the option of a resort to force which the isolated Caroline pressmaster seldom enjoyed.

Impressment afloat was an altogether different matter. Mariners at sea were likely to be as abusive and violent as they were on land, but a pressmaster was normally safer if he had his whole ship's company behind him. In 1636 the boatswain of the *Great Neptune* claimed that the master and the carpenter of the *Indifferent* of Ipswich were only prevented from setting about him with a pump and handspike by the intervention of his fellow crewmen.¹⁶² The physical presence of a warship and its crew must have made it considerably easier to obtain recruits at sea than on land. When the master of the *Alice* of London refused to allow Capt. Stradling to press his cooper in 1632, Stradling laid the master by the heels, '& upon more mature [consideration he delivered mee the man I required'.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, a merchant crew might put up an impressive fight. In 1629 the crew of the *Prudence* of London rescued two of their fellows from the press.¹⁶⁴

160 P.R.O., SP16/131/15, received 4 Jan. 1629, Richard Simpson to Privy Council; SP16/132/10, n.d., petition of John Jesson & 3 others.

161 House of Lords Record Office, Main Papers, (26 April - 11 May 1641), fo.22, n.d. I am grateful to Prof. Russell for this reference.

162 P.R.O., SP16/319/68, 29 April 1636, examination of John Couch & 7 others. See also SP16/319/61,82.

163 P.R.O., SP16/223/13, 7 Sept. 1632, Stradling to Nicholas. The part of the quotation in square brackets is torn away in the MS.

164 P.R.O., SP16/145/100, June 1629, articles against William Mellow. The *Prudence* was bound for the Mediterranean: C.S.P.D. 1629-31, CXLVI/75.

A pressmaster ashore was probably unlucky if he was assaulted, but it was less rare for him to be physically restrained. In 1637 the Principal Officers complained that 'sometymes haveing prest one, the rest there present will hold the pressmaster till the rest get awaie'.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, in the absence of any coercive power, it was far from obvious how the pressmaster was expected to require mariners to accept press money. A Proclamation of 1623 naïvely instructed all those to whom press money was tendered to 'duetifully and reverently receive the same', but as the Principal Officers complained, seamen usually spurned it.¹⁶⁶ Captain Francis Smith interpreted the acceptance of press money in the widest possible sense in 1636 when he placed the King's shilling in the hat of one William Hare, but Hare 'flung it from him in a p[re]sumptuous manner on the boards in the Chamber and said he would not serve doe what he co[ul]ld'.¹⁶⁷

The inability of pressmasters to resort to strong-arm tactics was a weakness compounded by the lack of any solid legal deterrent to prevent men from refusing to serve. In 1628 the lawyer M.P. John Selden created something of a stir in the Commons when he argued that the subject was not bound to accept press money because it was not warranted by medieval law or precedent. Significantly, Selden's arguments were not contested. Instead, they were greeted with limited support from other speakers and with alarm from the Solicitor-General. However, Sir Robert Phelps probably voiced the views of many members of the House when he argued that, although Selden was undoubtedly correct, it was nonetheless dangerous to pursue the matter for

165 P.R.O., SP16/354/113, 29 April 1637, Officers to Admiralty.

166 *Stuart Proclamations*, i. 634.

167 Brit. Lib., Egerton MS. 2584 fo.399, 7 May 1636, examination of Capt. Francis Smith. Hare was not the best choice to serve as a pilot, however, having lost his sight in one eye: *ibid.*, fo.2 (Hare's petition to the Admiralty).

fear of hindering the service.¹⁶⁸ Yet, if Selden was right, it was impossible for the Navy to punish mariners who refused to serve, and without the threat of legal action the already difficult job of the pressmaster would be rendered even harder.

If it was clear that mariners were not legally obliged to accept press money, once they had done so they were usually thought liable to punishment as felons if they absconded, on the grounds that they stood in breach of a statute of 1563.¹⁶⁹ It was probably because he had contravened this law that in 1630 John Salter of Walmer was ordered to be imprisoned for running off with his press money.¹⁷⁰ However, in 1635 two senior Admiralty Court judges, Dr. Thomas Rives and Sir Henry Marten, conferred on the legal question. Marten pointed out that the 1563 Act was an extension of a statute of 1440, which had prescribed punishment for soldiers who deserted after taking press money. The permanent nature of the 1440 Act had been convincingly challenged, which meant that any legislation which assumed the validity and extended the scope of the Lancastrian statute was itself null and void.¹⁷¹ If Marten was right, then impressment was extra-legal.¹⁷²

The government and the Admiralty proved understandably reluctant to face up to this. For the Principal Officers, who had enough problems to contend

168 *Commons Debates*, II. 280-1, 290-1.

169 *The Statutes of the Realm*, (10 vols., 1810-28), IV. 425, 5 Eliz. cap. 5.

170 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A207 (Cinque Port Admiralty Court book, 1626-31) fo.117v. The same day the court fined another 2 seamen in their absence for failing to appear to answer a similar charge: *ibid.*, fo.117.

171 P.R.O., SP16/289/41, 25 May 1635, Rives to Nicholas. For the 1440 statute, see *Statutes of the Realm*, II. 314-5, 18 Hen. VI, cap. 19. For the argument that the latter legislation was impermanent, see Sir Edward Coke's *Reports*, VI. 27.

172 Cap. 4 of the 1378 Statute of Gloucester threatened seamen who deserted after receiving wages from the King with one year in prison & a fine. I have been unable to discover whether it was still in force. One anonymous writer thought it might have been: 'consyder ye statute of 2 of Rich. 2 and what is fitt to be amended'. See Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 6843 fo.220v, n.d., but internal evidence points to 1618-26.

with, this was maddening. In 1637 they complained that they had been unable to ascertain how to proceed with the punishment of refusers and deserters 'whilch makes us bold to require a Resoluc[ion] from his Ma[jes]ties Judges or learned Councell for ofulr Instruccions in that behalfe'. However, the Officers suspected that there was no legal redress available to them. If this was the case, they asked to be permitted to administer corporal punishment in public, which they believed 'would terrifie the moste to as good effect'. 'Otherwise', they wrote, 'the continuall forbearance w[ith] them will...frustrate all deseignes or service, be it never so important for the safetie of his Ma[jes]ty & the State'.¹⁷³ There may have been something in this, but what many thought was needed was legislation. The King, however, refused to summon a parliament between 1629 and 1640. It was not until 1641, after Northumberland complained to the King that the press system had effectively collapsed, that Parliament was able to give naval impressment indisputable statutory recognition.¹⁷⁴

Sheer carelessness accentuated the inherent defects of the manning system. In June 1627 the Navy Commissioners recriminated that 'if the Cap[ita]ins and Officers had been as carefull to keepe their men aboard that were prest by their owne confession, as wee were carefull & ready to give them both power and monies...to furnish themselves the fleete would now have been double man'd'.¹⁷⁵ The justice of their complaint was borne out three months later, when sixty men of the *Assurance* deserted at Harwich,

173 P.R.O., SP16/354/113, 29 April 1637, Officers to Admiralty. One month earlier the Admiralty had ordered the Lord Keeper & the Attorney-General to consider a way of trying runaways, thereby ignoring Rives' letter to Nicholas of May 1635: SP16/475 fo.490v, 16 March 1637.

174 Bodl. Libr., MS. Tanner 66 fo.48, 5 April 1641, Northumberland to Charles I; *Lords' Journals*, iv. 239-41, 244-6; *Commons' Journals*, ii. 139-42. The 1641 legislation was temporary, however: *Statutes of the Realm*, v. 101, 133-4, 137.

175 P.R.O., SP16/66/33, 6 June 1627, Navy Commissioners to Buckingham.

having been permitted to go ashore by their captain, Sir Sackville Trevor. Trevor's negligence earned him a stern rebuke from the Privy Council.¹⁷⁶ Yet attempts to confine mariners to their ships, sometimes for months at a time, simply served to encourage desertion, as Nathaniel Boteler explained,

for the prohibitions being not in any possibility to be made good...by reason of the many shore boats that haunted the ships lying so near the shore...[mariners] often stole aboard them in the night, in spite of all care to the contrary, wherein the mariners stole passage to the shore even from their very watches, and being thus gotten thither, and having spent the little money they carried with them, they began (as they grew sober) to be so terrified with an apprehension of the punishment which they expected...if they returned...that they utterly forsook the service.¹⁷⁷

Pressed men were afforded ample opportunities to desert which even vigilant captains found difficult to prevent. In June 1632 Pennington complained that 'wee cannot send olur Boate ashore for water or any other busines, but one or other Runes awaye'.¹⁷⁸ Large numbers of men might flee when a crew was 'turned over' from one ship to another. An attempt to man four fireships and three pinnaces from the crews of two warships miscarried in 1626, when more than two-thirds of those turned over deserted, even though they were owed five months' wages.¹⁷⁹ In 1630 forty-six men were ordered to be turned over to the *Tenth Whelp* from two vessels which were paid off at Deptford, but although the men promised to leave for Chatham the following morning, 'there was none come downe upon Thirsdale at six of the Clock at night'.¹⁸⁰ When the *Anne Royal* was wrecked in the Thames in April 1636, no less than 200 of her crew of 250 men took to their heels, although the whole crew was ordered to be turned over to the *St. Andrew*.¹⁸¹

176 A.P.C. 1627-8, pp.37-8; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64893 fo.76v, 17 Sept. 1627, Trevor to Coke.

177 Boteler's *Dialogues*, pp.42-3.

178 P.R.O., SP16/218/58, 16 June 1632, Pennington to Admiralty.

179 P.R.O., SP16/36/60, 26 Sept. 1626, Navy Commissioners to Buckingham.

180 P.R.O., SP16/161/37, 20 Feb. 1630, Fleming to Nicholas.

181 P.R.O., SP16/326/10, 10 June 1636, Pennington to Admiralty.

Captains were sometimes hoodwinked into abetting desertion. In June 1633 Pennington allowed five newly pressed men three days in which to return home to fetch their clothes, but neither the men nor their escort returned.¹⁸² This would not have happened if the Navy had been prepared to provide its seamen with clothing on their impressment. However, it was one of the requirements of the system that mariners were to bring their own clothes.¹⁸³ Any clothing which the Navy provided was laid in purely to cover wear and tear. On the face of it, it would have made sense to clothe needy new recruits, but ironically it was believed that this would 'make the mariners handsome to runne away'.¹⁸⁴ This attitude has been construed as bureaucratic smugness in the face of human suffering, but the desertion which attended the eighteenth-century Marine Society's efforts to clothe fresh recruits suggests that it was not entirely without justification.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the Caroline Navy's attitude actively encouraged desertion. As Palmer observed in 1636, many mariners deliberately left their clothes behind to ensure their release.¹⁸⁶ Unless the Navy was prepared to collect the clothes of the men it impressed, the predicament was insoluble.¹⁸⁷

The chances of catching either deserters or defaulters were generally slim. Pressmasters were required to submit lists of names, ages and physical descriptions of those they recruited, but there was nothing to stop mariners from tendering false names, as the Principal Officers

182 P.R.O., SP16/241/58, 25 June 1633, Pennington to Admiralty.

183 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.83v, 8 May 1627, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners; P.R.O., PC2/44 fo.319, 19 June 1635, Privy Council instructions; PC2/45 fo.204v, 3 Feb. 1636, Privy Council instructions.

184 P.R.O., SP16/5/77, 25 Aug. 1625, Coke to Buckingham.

185 Powell, 'Seventeenth Century "Profiteering" in the Royal Navy', p.244; Rodger, *Wooden World*, p.108.

186 P.R.O., SP16/317/49, 28 March 1636, Palmer to Admiralty.

187 Mainwaring suggested in April 1627 that the clothes of pressed watermen should be sent on by their friends & masters: P.R.O., SP16/61/22.

observed in April 1637. Moreover, the Navy lacked the machinery for the discovery and pursuit of offenders. During the first week of September 1628, when Lindsey's fleet was preparing to put to sea, the job of policing the highways and byways around Portsmouth and Southampton was performed by the local Trained Band.¹⁸⁸ Normally, however, the Navy was almost wholly dependent on the civilian authorities, who often proved less than co-operative. In 1627 an energetic Sir John Watts instructed the mayors of Poole and Weymouth to return a number of deserters. Poole subsequently retrieved four men, but Weymouth sent 'neither men nor answer'.¹⁸⁹ In a treatise written for the Duke, Watts later urged Buckingham to hold the officers of each parish responsible for catching and punishing deserters, but he evidently assumed that the local authorities would co-operate in such a scheme.¹⁹⁰ In 1628 Coke threatened to arraign the mayors of Southampton and Poole before the Privy Council for failing to apprehend runaways. Coke interpreted their inaction as deliberate inertia, for as he told Buckingham, they might easily have caught those who 'could not bee unknown unto them'.¹⁹¹ Unfortunately it was precisely this familiarity between seamen and local magistrates which was the problem.

Yet the Navy was never entirely bereft of civilian allies. In April 1628 Devon's J.P.s declared themselves willing to help locate runaways.¹⁹²

188 It is not clear whether the militia, which included a troop of horse, proved particularly successful in catching deserters: P.R.O., SP16/116/2, 1 Sept. 1628, Coke to Conway; SP16/116/23, 3 Sept. 1628, Conway to Coke; SP16/116/23.I, 3 Sept. 1628, Conway to Hampshire's Deputy Lieutenants (copy); SP16/116/23.II, 3 Sept. 1628, Conway to Sir Richard Norton (copy); SP16/116/24, 3 Sept. 1628, Conway to Mayor of Southampton (copy); SP16/116/30, 3 Sept. 1628, Coke to Dorchester; SP16/116/47, 5 Sept. 1628, Sir Richard Norton to Conway.

189 P.R.O., SP16/41/35, 6 Dec. 1626.

190 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A192 pp.22-3.

191 P.R.O., SP16/108/18, 25 June 1628, Watts to Buckingham.

192 Devon Record Office, Devon Quarter Sessions, Order Book (1625-33), p.163, 24 April 1628. I am grateful to Dr. Todd Gray for this

During the Ship Money years the Navy also enjoyed the support of the mayor of Rochester, George Robinson, a former deputy victualler of the Navy.¹⁹³ Thus, shortly after the Privy Council ordered a twenty-four hour watch to be kept on Rochester bridge, Robinson gaoled four alleged deserters he had caught attempting to cross it.¹⁹⁴ Another co-operative north-Kent official was Robert Lee, constable of Gravesend. In 1635 he returned an unknown number of deserters to Chatham.¹⁹⁵ Three years later he was involved in similar activity in collaboration with the constables of Milton.¹⁹⁶

Another area which might co-operate with the Navy was the Cinque Ports, although traditional tensions between the Lord High Admiral and the Lord Warden over the impressment of portsmen outside the Ports had meant that the Lord Warden's officers had often proved unprepared to assist the Navy in hunting down runaways. However, between 1624 and 1628 both the offices of Lord Warden and Lord High Admiral were held by Buckingham. Edward Nicholas correctly believed that this benefited the Navy.¹⁹⁷ In July 1626 Buckingham authorised the pressmaster for Sussex to press mariners in the Cinque Ports in case he found that seamen were fleeing there to avoid the press in Sussex and thereby preventing him from obtaining his quota.¹⁹⁸ Even after Buckingham's death the Ports continued to assist the Navy in catching deserters, perhaps because the Ports' Admiralty Court Judge, Dr.

reference. It is probably not fanciful to see the hand of Sir James Bagg in this, whose allies dominated the county Lieutenancy.

193 P.R.O., SP16/151/33; SP16/162/68.

194 P.R.O., PC2/45 fo.236, 28 Feb. 1636, Privy Council to mayors of Rochester & Gravesend; P.R.O., SP16/315/140, 12 March 1636, Robinson to Palmer; SP16/317/49.1, 27 March 1636, information of the constable of Rochester, & the examination of the 4 seamen.

195 P.R.O., E351/2274, n.f., payment to Lee.

196 P.R.O., PC2/49. fo.100, 23 May 1638, Privy Council to Principal Officers. 197 P.R.O., SP12/237 fos.16-17, n.d., but 1626.

198 H.M.C., 13th Rept., app., pt. iv. p.177, 18 July 1626, Buckingham to John Totton.

John Rives, was also the King's Advocate. Thus, in May 1629 the mayor and jurats of Sandwich informed the Lieutenant of Dover Castle that they had caught a man who had tried to run away after accepting press money, although two others had succeeded in escaping. The mayor might have chosen to forget the two men, but instead he caught one of them soon after.¹⁹⁹

One way that the Navy could ensure the co-operation of the local authorities was if members of the Navy Board were themselves active on the Bench. In December 1625 the Navy Commissioners called upon their colleague Sir Allen Apsley, who was a Middlesex J.P., to order the constables of Tower Hamlets to conduct a night-time 'privy search' in Wapping, Ratcliff, Limehouse and Blackwall to ferret out deserters and defaulters.²⁰⁰ However, the Navy Board was generally slow to recognise the importance of membership of the Bench. It was not until 1640 that three of its members were added to the Commissions of the Peace for Essex, Middlesex, Surrey and Hampshire.²⁰¹

The hostility of most local authorities towards the pursuit of runaways suggests that there was a strong need for the Navy to do its own policing. During the 1630s Nathaniel Boteler suggested that a number of veteran naval captains should be commissioned for this purpose, to be distinguished by coloured neck ribbons, truncheons or both.²⁰² This was not entirely absurd. As an emergency measure in April 1627 Buckingham had authorized Sir John Watts to pursue deserters 'with hue and Cry'.²⁰³ However, the desperate

199 Brit. Libr., Add. MS 24113 fo.3, 29 May 1629, Henry Forstall & jurats to Dering; *ibid.*, fo.4v, 5 June 1629, Forstall to Dering; *ibid.*, fo.8, 2 July 1629, Forstall to Dering.

200 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64886 fo.15v, 2 Dec. 1625, Wolstenholme to Coke; *ibid.*, fo.12, 2 Dec. 1625, Apsley to Coke.

201 P.R.O., A01/1705/85 fo.5; A01/1705/86 fo.7. The 3 Officers were Palmer, Carteret & Batten. Palmer was already a Kent J.P., but it is not known whether he had ever exerted his influence on the Bench to assist the press.

202 Boteler's *Dialogues*, pp.45-6.

203 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.49v, 3 April 1627. Gabriel Marsh, an

response to a crisis was never translated into an institutional form. One reason for this may have been that naval officials who were employed as searchers were often recognised by those who wished to escape the press, as the Principal Officers pointed out in 1637.

The Officers advocated a more subtle approach. Messengers of the Privy Chamber, they suggested, should be ordered to make night-time searches along the Thames, 'as is usuall in cases of Jesuits or the lyke'.²⁰⁴ The Admiralty ignored this constructive proposal, but the Officers decided to employ one David Williams to catch runaways. In 1637 they reported that one deserter had been found in London by 'our Officer', and that another two, possibly also apprehended by Williams, had been handed over to the City Recorder and Middlesex justices. However, although this was a step in the right direction, there were limits to what one man could achieve. Moreover, there were insuperable obstacles which prevented a legal condemnation of the men Williams had caught, as the Middlesex justices pointed out.²⁰⁵

The problem of how to locate deserters and defaulters without drawing an unhelpful degree of attention to the searchers was one which faced pressmasters generally. 'As soone as one man is imprested the rest have notice, and so they fly and disperse themselves into the countrie', wrote Hugh Watkin in 1623.²⁰⁶ Writing to Coke from Southampton in June 1628, Edisbury related that, although he had pressed a handful of mariners, he

Admiralty officer, was also ordered to search for runaways: *ibid.*, fos.58,70.

204 P.R.O., SP16/349/37, 5 March 1637, Russell & Edisbury to Nicholas.

205 P.R.O., SP16/354/40, 20 April 1637, Nicholas' Admiralty notes; SP16/354/113, 29 April 1637, Principal Officers to Admiralty. One of the captured men had not actually received press money. The pressmaster who had pressed one of the other men was absent on the Saltee expedition, & without his testimony it was felt that the case could not proceed. The Navy continued to employ a man to track down runaways during the Civil War: P.R.O., ADM18/1 p.103, payment to Miles Ruggles.

206 Devon Record Office, DD62093, 1 Sept. 1623, Watkin to [Rutland?].

had seen 'many more flying from me in boats ov[er] the water'.²⁰⁷ In spite of his antipathy towards watermen, in 1635 Monson complained that 'the most sufficient [water]men fly away who have used the sea'.²⁰⁸ There was no easy way to minimise the problem, but whoever drafted the instructions issued to Capt. Michael Greene in 1627 had the right idea. Greene was told to make his way to Weymouth, where he should pretend that 'the cause of your coming is to fetch away the five shalloops whilch are provided ther'. However, when these were ready and a couple of naval pinnaces had arrived 'then you are to publish the cause of yor coming for the pressing of mariners'.²⁰⁹

Saddled as it was with inadequate legal powers, and a machinery for procuring, retaining and recovering mariners that was its own worst enemy, the Navy nevertheless muddled through with the manning of its ships in the years before the Civil War. This is not as surprising as it may seem. Both before 1625 and after 1642 the Navy was beset by manning problems which were at least as great as those experienced in the Caroline period. The difficulties encountered by the Navy in the wake of Blake's defeat off Dungeness in November 1652 provide a striking illustration.

One of the major problems experienced in 1653 was how to avoid alerting local seamen to the pressmaster's presence. In March, for instance, the Navy's agent at Bristol declared that Thomas Hewitt and John Penny had 'frighted all the seamen from their homes, soe that hardly a man is at present to bee gotten'.²¹⁰ This precisely echoed a letter written from

207 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64896 fo.39v, 6 June 1628.

208 P.R.O., SP16/286/80, 13 April 1635, Monson to Nicholas. Watermen were the only class of seamen who were legally forbidden to flee the pressmaster: *Statutes of the Realm*, iv. 291, 2 & 3, Philip & Mary, cap.16.

209 P.R.O., SP16/65/60, n.d.

210 P.R.O., ADMIRALTY 106/3538, pt. i, unnumbered bundle, 30 March 1653, Thomas Shewell to Navy Commissioners. (I am grateful to Dr. Peter Lefèvre for drawing my attention to this bundle). In 1596 one pressmaster remarked, 'my busines might well be compared to ould fish

Bristol in October 1627 by the Navy's agent, William Willett, who informed Nicholas that 'the indiscretions of the pressmaster was such yt noe men could come nere the [merchant] shipps, whilch made them give over there voyages'.²¹¹ Similarly, in 1653, as in the 1620s and 1630s, there was no guarantee that those who received press money would actually present themselves for service. Thus, Capt. Thomas Maryott informed the Navy Commissioners in May 1653 that 'hardly one in ten doe aperes [*sic*]'.²¹² The main reason for this was that there was still no system of conduct.²¹³ In addition, local officials proved as unlikely to assist the Navy in the 1650s as they had been under Charles I. Hewitt and Penny asserted in March 1653 that while Bristol's mayor had offered them genuine assistance, 'for ye Rest of ye Mailestiats, whow ar very much Intristed in Marchentdiezing & shiping', they 'only semingly would promoat ye publick design'.²¹⁴ Only in the London area did the press prove particularly effective.²¹⁵

The Interregnum Navy may actually have been worse off than its Caroline predecessor, because it needed to employ large numbers of soldiers to augment its crews as a matter of course during the First Anglo-Dutch War. By contrast, in the 1620s and 1630s the maritime population always exceeded the Navy's needs. This conclusion does not square well with the opinion of those who, according to Nathaniel Boteler, doubted that there were enough seamen to man the Caroline fleet. However, it seems unlikely that Boteler, who, as was seen at the beginning of this chapter, cheats his reader of a proper debate, could have made a very convincing case for the doubters.

whilch often tymes is unsavory': P.R.O., T1/1, no.2, 7 Nov. 1596, Robert Browne to Privy Council.

211 P.R.O., SP16/80/42, 4 Oct. 1627.

212 P.R.O., SP18/36/41, 9 May 1653.

213 Capp, *Cromwell's Navy*, p.269.

214 P.R.O., SP46/34/81, 25 March 1653, Hewitt & Penny to Navy Commissioners; Capp, *Cromwell's Navy*, pp.265-7.

215 Capp, *Cromwell's Navy*, p.264.

Chapter 6

VICTUALLING

I. Conditions of Service

In the later 1620s the Navy's manning problem was exacerbated by its victualling service, for large numbers of men died as a result of food poisoning or starvation. Under such conditions it often proved difficult for the Navy to retain the crews it raised, and even more difficult to replace those it lost. Writing to Buckingham in March 1626, Pennington deplored the fact that his squadron was being forced to feed upon the previous year's leftovers, which induced many of his men to 'runne awaie as fast as we press them'.¹ Discontent among the Navy's sailors with both the quantity and quality of their victuals helped to precipitate a series of mutinies between 1626 and 1628. In June 1626 the officers of the *Red Lion* informed their captain that the main reason his crew had mutinied was that they had not been paid, but they added that 'a secondary cause' concerned 'some disorder in oure vittelling...wanting some dayes bread, other dayes beare'.² Seven months later the men of the *Vanguard* complained of 'ill provideing and bad meate of their allowance in victualls'.³ In February 1627 Capt. Philpot of the *Globe*, an armed merchantman in the King's service, wrote from Portsmouth that his crew was victualled with 'such refuse and old stuff as our men abhor', which had caused them to mutiny and many to desert. Philpot warned that unless he was ordered to sail for London soon, he would not have enough men to bring the ship round.⁴

1 P.R.O., SP16/22/23, 4 March 1626.

2 P.R.O., SP16/30/59, 27 June 1626, officers of the *Lion* to Pennington.

3 P.R.O., SP16/49/71, n.d. [Jan. 1627], *Vanguard's* crew to Navy Commissioners.

4 P.R.O., SP16/53/77, 10 Feb. 1627, Philpot to Nicholas.

The victualling service virtually collapsed in 1629. Writing in late September, Admiral Mervyn reported that one of his captains had been instructed to take in a supply of victuals at Dover. However, 'enquiring after it', the captain found 'order only for 7 days victuall for the dreadnought but none at all for him, he hath not one dayes victualls on boarde'. Another of Mervyn's captains was obliged to force his men to drink water for three days, 'and have not any beare but what the Capt. procureth from daye to daye where he can gett it, and his creditt is at the farthest stretch, and wante hath put his company into a mutinie'.⁵ The captain of the *Dreadnought*, Richard Plumleigh, only prevented members of his crew from deserting his ship by wounding the mutineers' ringleader with his sword. Plumleigh had earlier obtained two weeks' worth of victuals from the English merchant Sir Peter Courteen while his ship had lain windbound at Flushing, but his crew, 'thinking the proportion too small, fell into mutiny'.⁶ Scenes such as these were not to be repeated during the 1630s, for with the end of the war with Spain in 1630 the victualling service staged something of a recovery. Nevertheless, as late as 1635 one sailor publicly declared that he would 'as leave [*sic*] bee hanged as bee starved in the king's service'.⁷

The hardships endured by ordinary seamen in the war years of the 1620s were immense, but the inadequate provision of victuals was not the only reason for high levels of sickness and mortality. As Nathaniel Boteler observed, so many sailors fell sick or died during the return of the fleet

5 P.R.O., SP16/149/90, 25 Sept. 1629.

6 P.R.O., SP16/149/57, 17 Sept. 1629, Plumleigh to Dorchester; P.R.O., SP84/140/30, 17 Sept. 1629, list of Plumleigh's disbursements; SP16/149/83, 24 Sept. 1629, Plumleigh to Admiralty; SP16/149/84, 24 Sept. 1629, Plumleigh to Nicholas.

7 P.R.O., SP16/289/79, 30 May 1635, Anthony Percival to Suffolk.

from Cadiz in 1625 that 'most of our best ships were in eminent danger to be lost at sea through the want of hands to manage their sails'. This was mainly thought 'to proceed from the unwholesomeness of our victuals in general'. Boteler did not dispute this, but he added that the overcrowding of the ships with soldiers, who through their 'seasickness and nastiness procure many infectious diseases as well to themselves as all that sail with them', made a serious problem much worse.⁸ Boteler's conclusions have found support in the work of J.J. Keevil, who has concluded that 'the epidemic which decimated Wimbledon's expedition was almost certainly typhus', which probably originated among the soldiers.⁹

Overcrowding was only one factor which served to exacerbate the evil effects of an inadequate victualling service. Another source of ill health among seamen was the meagre provision of clothing. In 1625 one captain observed of his crew that their clothes were 'as needfull allmost as there meate'.¹⁰ Admiral Mervyn, who has been described as 'the most zealous of all officers in this respect', urged Buckingham to despatch a supply of clothing to his men in January 1628, for many 'are so naked that, exposed to the weather in doing theire duties, theire toes and feete miserably rott and falle away peecemeale, beeing mortified with extreame cold'.¹¹

Throughout the war years there were many other requests like this, though most were less graphically illustrated.¹² Even after the ending of

8 *Boteler's Dialogues*, pp.62-3.

9 J.J. Keevil, *Medicine and the Navy, 1200-1900: Volume I - 1200-1649*, (Edinburgh & London, 1957), pp.173-4.

10 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64884 fo.17, 27 June 1625, Chudleigh to Coke.

11 P.R.O., SP16/90/38, 8 Jan. 1628. Mervyn's letter appears to have prompted the issue of a set of instructions for the provision of clothing 3 days later: P.R.O., SP12/237 fo.57, printed in *Mariner's Mirror*, lli, (1913), pp.178-9.

12 E.g. P.R.O., SP16/5/6, 2 Aug. 1625, Bagg to Buckingham; SP16/39/46, 10 Nov. 1626, Watts to Buckingham; SP16/40/21, 24 Nov. 1626, Watts to Buckingham; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64887 fo.73, 31 Jan. 1626, Palmer to Coke.

hostilities the problem remained acute. Thus, in December 1636, Mervyn reported that many of his men had 'scarcely rags to hide theire skinne', and consequently the cold weather forced him to discharge more of his crew than he could replace from passing ships.¹³ Yet the best efforts of the naval administration failed to solve this problem, primarily because of a lack of money. Clothes were never provided in a sufficient quantity, and those items which were furnished were sold rather than given to the seamen.¹⁴ Although Buckingham was evidently genuinely concerned that naval clothing should be 'of the best sort' and reasonably rated, this did not prevent complaints from captains either then or later that the slops provided were of a low quality and overpriced.¹⁵

The failings of the victualling service in the later 1620s were made much worse by the attendant problems of overcrowding and inadequate clothing, but they were not rendered any the less shocking as a result. The department's poor performance between 1625 and 1630 inevitably led to speculation that the victuallers were as corrupt as their provisions. Nevertheless, even observers who were critical of Buckingham's management of the wars against France and Spain were careful to vindicate the

13 P.R.O., SP16/337/15, 6 Dec. 1636, Mervyn to Admiralty.

14 For evidence that the naval administration & government did its best to alleviate the problem, see Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.36v, 29 April 1625; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.15v, 16 Feb. 1627, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners; *ibid.*, fo.120, 20 June 1627, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners; A.P.C. 1627-8, p.493, 14 June 1628; A.P.C. 1628-9, p.33, 15 July 1628; P.R.O., E351/2264, n.f., (1626); E351/2266, n.f., (1628); E351/2272, n.f., (1633, on expenditure in 1627). For evidence that the Navy was handicapped by a shortage of funds, see P.R.O., SP16/67/91, 22 June 1627, Wolstenholme to Nicholas; SP16/85/65, 29 Nov. 1627, Navy Commissioners to Buckingham.

15 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.137, 15 July 1626, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners. For a later complaint concerning the price & quality of the clothes, see P.R.O., SP16/64/76, 27 May 1627, Mervyn to Buckingham. For a fuller discussion of this whole topic, see Powell, 'Seventeenth Century "Profiteering" in the Royal Navy', pp.243-50.

principal Victualler, Sir Allen Apsley. When in June 1628 a clergyman named Cailliff Morley accused Apsley in the House of Commons of having provided Buckingham's army the previous year with victuals which had poisoned 4,000 men, Sir John Eliot, who was one of Buckingham's sternest critics, joined the former Navy Commissioner Sir Robert Pye in declaring that Apsley 'had done the King good service in victualling his ships'. Indeed, both men asserted that if there had been anything lacking 'it was of money not care'.¹⁶ This pithy assessment went straight to the heart of the problem, for lack of money was the single most important obstacle which confronted the victualling service, not only under Apsley, but also under his immediate successors.

II. Finance

Underfunding was an acute problem for Apsley between 1625 and his death in 1630. The crews of the ships funded by the Ordinary arguably suffered the most, for the government was forced to spend the lion's share of its scarce resources on equipping various expeditions rather than on the more mundane task of defending the Channel. During the first six months of 1627 Apsley received only £2,700 towards the cost of the Ordinary, 'whilch hath not bene enoughe to victuall the shippes in harbor'.¹⁷ The following year Apsley should have received nearly £13,500 to pay for the Channel squadron, but in fact his receipts amounted to just £6,272, and of this sum £1,300 was not paid until 1629.¹⁸ Matters were particularly desperate in August 1626, when most of the crew of the Admiral of the Narrow Seas' flagship simply melted away because Sir Allen had received no money to pay for the

¹⁶ *Commons' Debates, 1628*, iv. 155, 172.

¹⁷ P.R.O., SP16/72/66, 'State of the Ordinary', c. July 1627.

¹⁸ P.R.O., E351/2428, n.f.

ship to be revictualled.¹⁹ However, it was not just the Channel squadron which felt the consequences of under-funding. In 1626, for instance, the Vice-Admiral of Lord Willoughby's fleet, the Earl of Denbigh, described his squadron's beer as 'not fitting for any cristians to drinke'.²⁰ London gossip attributed this to a brewer who, when questioned, had retorted that 'he could not brew better at 30s the tunne'.²¹

Apsley did his best to minimise the effects of underfunding by dipping into his purse and extending his credit. In May 1628 he announced that he had sold and mortgaged his lands, and engaged the credit of himself and his friends to the tune of £100,000.²² Impressive though this was, neither Apsley's resources, nor those of his creditors, were limitless. Consequently, Apsley died bankrupt in 1630. His agent at Portsmouth, Henry Holt, suffered a similar fate, although he made considerable efforts to prevent his slide into financial ruin. In 1626 Admiral Watts complained that Holt would only deliver beer to his squadron if he was provided with money. Three years later Holt refused to revictual some ships because he had received no money and because 'there is dewe to severall men above 2500ll besydes yt whilch is dewe to me'.²³ Despite these efforts to limit his losses, Holt was owed large sums by the Navy at his death in 1631.²⁴

Apsley's successor as Victualler was his nominal partner, Sir Sampson Darrell. Darrell never experienced financial difficulties on such a grand

19 A.P.C. 1626, p.178, 11 Aug. 1626.

20 P.R.O., SP16/35/102, 16 Sept. 1626, Denbigh to Privy Council.

21 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 390 fo.147, 27 Oct. 1626, Mead to Stuteville. The market rates for beer at that time were 36s & 48s the tun: P.R.O., SP16/33/110.

22 P.R.O., SP16/105/80.I, [30 May] 1628, Apsley to Charles I.

23 P.R.O., SP16/40/32, 27 Nov. 1626, Watts to Buckingham; SP16/140/27, 7 April 1629, Holt to Alcock.

24 A.P.C. 1630-1, p.154, 15 Dec. 1630. For Holt's will, see P.R.O., PROB11/164 fos.109-11.

scale as Apsley. Nevertheless, under Darrell the victualling department almost ground to a halt for want of money. From Darrell's viewpoint, Apsley's death six months before the cessation of hostilities with Spain was decidedly premature. During the second half of 1630 he spent twice as much as he received.²⁵ In March 1631 he calculated the difference between his receipts and expenditure at £3,709, although the Audit Office subsequently reduced this figure by £467.²⁶ However, it was not until December 1634 that the Exchequer finally paid this debt in full.²⁷ It was not surprising that, in the intervening period, the strain began to tell. In June 1632 Darrell informed Nicholas that he was unable to resupply the warships in the Channel because he had not been paid his arrears.²⁸ Disaster was only averted six weeks later, when the Exchequer sent Sir Sampson £1,500 in part payment of its wartime debt to him.²⁹ However, this marked a significant turning point. Over the next two years Darrell obtained sufficient funds to eliminate all his debts, and to leave him with a surplus of more than £3,283.³⁰ Indeed, matters were so improved that, on Sir Sampson's death in May 1635, it was his estate which was indebted to the Crown rather than the other way round.³¹

In the later 1630s the Crown once again slipped into the Victualler's debt as a result of dwindling Ship Money receipts and the financial pressures created by the Bishops' Wars. The new Victualler, John Crane,

25 P.R.O., E101/67/28, (Darrell's Quarter Books, July-Dec. 1630).

26 Burlington House, Soc. of Antiquaries MS. 203 fo.138 [March 1631, Darrell to Cottington]; P.R.O., E351/2431, declared 21 July 1631.

27 E403/1748 fo.101.

28 P.R.O., SP16/218/52, 14 June 1632.

29 P.R.O., E403/1746, n.f., 28 July 1632.

30 P.R.O., E351/2432-4 (Declared Accounts, 1631,1633-4); P.R.O., A01/1800/381 (Declared Account, 1632); P.R.O., LR9/71 fos.49v-50v (abstract of accounts, 1631-3).

31 P.R.O., SP16/296/12, 20 Aug. 1635, breviat of Darrell's accounts; P.R.O., T56/1 fos.31,35r-v,55v.

took office in November 1635 following a short period in which the Navy Board ran the victualling service on an experimental basis. Crane did his best to avoid exposing himself to serious financial risk. For instance, in 1639 he petitioned the Privy Council for payment of £8,000 within one month so that he might buy and prepare the victuals which would be needed the following spring, 'otherwaies I shall not be able to pferlforme what may be required of mee'.³² Nevertheless, Crane's accounts for 1639 demonstrate that he was then a creditor to the Crown for more than £17,730.³³ It is not difficult to imagine how this state of affairs had arisen, for in view of the Crown's recurrent financial difficulties no Victualler, no matter how prudent, could hope to avoid advancing his own cash or extending his own credit with his suppliers. Although the Victualler normally received a sizeable advance payment, known as an 'imprest', he was obliged to find the rest of the cost of the victuals he provided out of his own pocket until his account could be settled in full. This pattern is well illustrated by events in 1640. In January Crane was authorised to receive £22,825 from the Exchequer for victualling twenty ships. Although he received an imprest of £12,000 the following month, his initial expenditure amounted to more than £17,947, and by the latter end of June he had received only £2,000 from the Ship Money fund to cover the difference between what he had spent and what he had received.³⁴ This prompted him to complain to the Privy Council.³⁵ Over the summer, Crane received a further £5,000 from the Exchequer.³⁶

32 P.R.O., SP16/432/9, 3 Nov. 1639.

33 Crane was indebted to the Crown £3,987 on his Exchequer account, but he was owed about £21,718 on his Ship Money account: P.R.O., E351/2443-4.

34 P.R.O., SP16/444/8, 1 Feb. 1640, Navy Treasurers to [Windebank]; SP16/443/26, 30 Jan. 1640, Crane to Privy Council; P.R.O., E405/285 fo.120, 5 Feb. 1640; P.R.O., E351/2243 fo.1v, payment, 6 April 1640.

35 SP16/457/99, 23 June 1640, Crane to [Privy Council].

36 P.R.O., E405/285 fo.144v; P.R.O., SP16/465/9, 26 Aug. 1640, Crane to Privy Council.

However, this was still not enough to provide all his victuals. As Crane received no more money, it seems likely that he was left to shoulder the outstanding sum of £3,825 himself.

Successive Victuallers were not only starved of adequate funds to pay for the provisioning of the Navy's ships; they were also denied the capital funding which was desperately needed to pay for the repair and expansion of their department's buildings. The major premises occupied by the Victualler and his staff were located in the Abbey of Graces, a former medieval monastery on Tower Hill. In theory, the Victualler was contractually responsible for the cost of maintaining the Abbey himself, which he was supposed to pay for by renting out some of the Abbey's rooms as shops. However, as the Navy Board pointed out in 1635, previous Victuallers had chosen to 'purse up the benefit received by rents', which was hardly surprising as they had been so poorly funded. The result was that the Abbey was in such a ruinous condition that the cost of its repair was estimated at £1,680. The Victualler's storehouse at Dover, known as the Maison Dieu, was in an even worse state, for it was on the verge of falling down. In all, the complete cost of restoring the department's dilapidated buildings was estimated, somewhat conservatively, at £3,262 12s.³⁷ It was little wonder that Crane refused to be held responsible for their maintenance until they had been repaired,³⁸ yet the Admiralty was unwilling to shoulder the cost. In the event, a compromise solution appears to have been reached. Crane agreed to pay the cost of repairing the Abbey, and in return the Attorney-General was instructed to ensure that he was fully reimbursed by

37 P.R.O., SP16/301/110, 17 Nov. 1635, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

38 P.R.O., SP16/322/49, May 1636, brief of Crane's contract, with desired alterations. Although Crane became Victualler in Nov. 1635, his contract was not formally agreed until 20 Feb. 1637. For the contract, see Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A216 pp.193-200.

his predecessors' executors, with whom legal responsibility lay. This arrangement evidently proved at least partly satisfactory, for by March 1638 Crane had spent £1,113 9s 6d in repairing the Abbey.³⁹ Nevertheless, these improvements were somewhat overdue. For many years the victualling department had been forced by its own poverty to conduct its business in buildings whose condition made them manifestly unfit for the preparation and storage of victuals.

During the war years of the 1620s the building which was probably most in need of repair was the victualling department's brewhouse at Portsmouth. In 1628 Henry Holt estimated that £300 needed to be spent on it. The trivial size of this sum belied the fact that, unless it was repaired, the brewhouse was useless. On one occasion Holt informed Nicholas in frustration that he had only managed to brew forty tons of beer at Weymouth and in his own brewery at Portsmouth, whereas if the King's brewhouse had been fitted 'I colde have maed 100 ton in 12 dayes'. It seems that Holt may have subsequently repaired the brewhouse at his own cost in return for the payment of some of his arrears.⁴⁰

The ruinous state of the brewhouse was compounded by the inadequate size of the victualling department's storehouse at Portsmouth. In January 1628 this building was easily filled with the remains of victuals from the fleet which had sailed to Ré the previous year, so that Holt was driven to search in vain for additional storage space elsewhere.⁴¹ The same difficulty

39 P.R.O., SP16/386/72, 31 March 1638, Commissioners for surveying the victualling houses to Sir Charles Rich; P.R.O., PC2/49 fo.117, 30 May 1638, Privy Council to Bankes.

40 P.R.O., SP16/95/89, 14 March 1628, Holt to Nicholas; SP16/120/71, 15 Nov. 1628, Holt to Nicholas. The fact that, sometime before his death in 1631, Holt bequeathed to his son, Thomas, 3 new vats which stood in the King's brewhouse, suggests that by this time repairs had been carried out: P.R.O., PROB11/164 fo.109.

41 P.R.O., SP16/90/68, 12 Jan. 1628, Holt to Nicholas.

cropped up six months later, when it became necessary to unload the wheat from the ships which had recently returned from La Rochelle, to prevent it from spoiling in the hot weather. The problem was so acute that Secretary Coke complained that 'wee are more trobled wíllth the unlading & disposing of that wíhíłch is brought back then wee are with the making of a new store'.⁴² Like the dilapidated condition of the Navy's other victualling houses, the inadequate storage facilities at Portsmouth ultimately had a financial root. In the later 1620s the Navy simply could not afford to build more storehouses at Portsmouth, while in the 1630s money which might have been used to this purpose was spent on other things.⁴³

It is clear that the record of successive naval Victuallers must be seen in the context of chronic underfunding. Viewed from a financial perspective, many of the victualling department's failures were inevitable. However, there were some contemporaries who believed that the department's financial problems were exacerbated by the manner in which it was organised. It is to this question that we now turn.

III. Organisation and Personnel

At the head of the victualling department stood the Surveyor of Marine Victuals. Before 1635 there were, in theory at least, two such officers. However, Sir Allen Apsley ran the department on his own until his death in 1630, as did his nominal partner, Sir Sampson Darrell, between 1630 and 1635. It was not until the appointment of John Crane as Darrell's successor that the practice of allowing just one man to execute the office was officially endorsed. The dominant position of a single Victualler was a

42 P.R.O., SP16/107/3, n.d., received 12 June 1628, Coke to Buckingham.

43 For a broader discussion of capital underfunding, see above ch.4.

major source of complaint. Writing to Buckingham in June 1625, Sir Edward Cecil commented that 'it is not good to trust upon a particular Man, for gain is a corrupter where the Care is not publick'.⁴⁴ Two years later Nathaniel Boteler declared that the victualling of a fleet was 'over vast to pass under the care and management of one only victualler (be he never so diligent, sufficient, and well credited)'. Instead of a centralised administration, Boteler urged that the captain, master and purser of every ship should be permitted to victual their own crew.⁴⁵ Ten years later an anonymous critic suggested that no one officer should be permitted to victual more than three or four ships.⁴⁶ The exponents of a reformed victualling service may have found their most important advocate in Sir John Coke, who in 1628 wondered whether independent victuallers ought not to be employed at London, Dover, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Bristol.⁴⁷

During the war years of the 1620s the victualling department was less centralised than these criticisms implied. Although the Victualler's monopoly was enshrined in his contract, Buckingham employed two officials who were unassociated with Apsley to help provision the Navy's ships. One of these men was Sir John Hippisley who, as Lieutenant of Dover Castle, was subject to Buckingham's authority as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. In October 1626 Hippisley asked for permission to victual a naval pinnace which was operating off Dover rather than send her to London for this purpose, for 'you knowe what tyme is lost by that', to which Buckingham agreed.⁴⁸ Two months later he offered to provide victuals for the Navy at

44 *Cabala: Mysteries of State and Government in Letters of Illustrious Persons*, (1691), p.169, 3 June 1625.

45 *Boteler's Dialogues*, p.60.

46 Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fos. 138-9.

47 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64895 fo.119v, (Coke's diary, 1628).

48 P.R.O., SP16/41/42, 7 Dec. 1626, Hippisley to Buckingham; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37819 fo.29v, 3 Oct. 1626, Buckingham to Hippisley.

Dover at a cheaper rate than Apsley with the proviso that he was properly funded and that he was allowed to use the King's storehouse.⁴⁹ When it became clear that a major expedition would soon be mounted against the French, Hippisley's offer was eagerly accepted by the Duke.⁵⁰ Over the next few years, Hippisley provided victuals worth £3,824 7s 6d, which he paid for out of the proceeds of prizes that were sold locally.⁵¹

The scale of Hippisley's activity pales by comparison with that of Sir James Bagg at Plymouth. Between 1625 and 1628 Bagg disbursed more than £51,000 for the Navy, most of which went towards the provision of victuals. Like Hippisley, Sir James owed his position to Buckingham's direct influence rather than to Apsley. As Vice-Admiral of South Cornwall he had brought himself to the Duke's notice in 1623 by offering to provide victuals for the Earl of Rutland, the commander of the fleet which was sent to fetch Buckingham and Prince Charles from Spain. 'Yf your honor please to Commannd ofte that waye, or to esteeme me as your servant in this place', he remarked, 'I shall, by the pferlformance of your Com[ma]nds, give a true testimony'.⁵² Bagg soon had his wish, for the preparations for war with Spain at the beginning of 1625 afforded him the opportunity to serve Buckingham on a grand scale. By March he was engaged in preparing victuals for the use of the fleet, apparently on the Duke's orders.⁵³ Bagg's

49 P.R.O., SP16/41/42, 7 Dec. 1626, Hippisley to Buckingham.

50 A.P.C. 1627, p.135, 14 March 1627; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37819 fo.42, 28 March 1627, Buckingham to Hippisley; *ibid.*, fo.50v, 29 [May] 1627, Buckingham to Hippisley.

51 P.R.O., E351/2509 (accounts of Hippisley, Sir Peter Heyman & James Hugensson, jnr); P.R.O., SP16/66/18, 2 June 1627, note of victuals provided at Dover.

52 P.R.O., SP14/147/3, 17 June 1623, Bagg to Buckingham. The willingness with which this gesture of service was accepted delighted Bagg, who reciprocated the favour by baking some meats 'for the duke my M^{ast}er': SP14/147/83, 23 June 1623, Bagg to Coke.

53 P.R.O., SP14/185/89, 21 March 1625, Bagg to Buckingham.

independence of Apsley was demonstrated in 1628, when the two men fell out and Apsley refused to pay any of Bagg's bills. Although Apsley sent his own deputy to Plymouth, he proved powerless to remove Bagg, who continued to enjoy Buckingham's support.⁵⁴

Buckingham's decision to employ Bagg and Hippisley alongside the official victualling department did not mean that Apsley was able to dispense with his own deputies. Nathaniel Boteler at least deplored this fact. The reason he advocated a decentralised victualling service was that the existing system forced the Victualler to rely upon 'divers and sundry deputies in several ports and parts, being creatures for the most part no farther interested nor true than to their own ends'. In the case of those pursers who obtained the right to victual their own ships, there may have been some truth in this claim. According to Sir William Monson, a purser could pay the Victualler for the privilege of victualling his ship. He then recouped his outlay and made a profit by cheating the King. However, it is impossible to verify this allegation.⁵⁵

There is little evidence to suggest that Apsley's senior staff were corrupt. The most prominent of Apsley's employees was Stephen Alcock, his trusted lieutenant. Alcock evidently managed the victualling department during Apsley's absence at the Ile de Ré in 1627.⁵⁶ It was a tribute to his

54 P.R.O., SP16/94/42, 25 Feb. 1628, Apsley to Nicholas; SP16/110/50, 22 July 1628, Bagg to Buckingham.

55 *Monson's Tracts*, iv. 146. It is not known how widespread sub-contraction to pursers was. One writer in 1637 merely states that Crane contracted 'with some of the pursers in the fleete': Alnwick Castle MSS., vol. 14 (Brit. Libr. microfilm 285) fo.139. These are known to include Edward Goodfellow of the *Swiftsure*: P.R.O., SP16/437/94, n.d., Goodfellow to Northumberland.

56 For evidence that Alcock ran the department in Apsley's absence, see Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C160/15), 20 Aug. 1627, notes by Coke; P.R.O., SP16/75/9, 25 Aug. 1627, Coke to Conway.

usefulness, and perhaps also to his honesty, that Alcock went on to serve both Darrell and Crane. During the early 1630s naval officers tended to liaise with Alcock rather than with the inexperienced Darrell to settle their victualling difficulties.⁵⁷ It was therefore not surprising that Alcock was ultimately appointed Victualler himself.⁵⁸

Apsley's deputy at Portsmouth was the town's mayor, Henry Holt. Like his counterpart at Rochester, John Duling, Holt also supplied beer to the Navy.⁵⁹ The ambivalence of his position may have afforded Holt plentiful opportunities with which to line his pockets. However, it must be doubted whether he took advantage of them, for in fact Holt ruined himself in Apsley's service. Moreover, in the summer of 1628, while providing victuals for the fleets which sailed to La Rochelle, Holt was obliged to operate under the watchful eye of Sir John Coke. Coke was not always satisfied with the quality of victuals which Holt provided. Writing to Buckingham in June he declared that, although he had exhorted Holt to take care, his provisions 'not wⁱlthstanding giveth cause of exception even in the fresh victuals he sends aboard'.⁶⁰ On one occasion it was alleged that the fish Holt had delivered was so small 'that it would bee a iust cause of mutinie'.⁶¹ However, Holt was more likely than not the innocent victim of unscrupulous suppliers. He seems to have endeavoured to use only trustworthy men, for in a letter to Nicholas he reported that many of the local brewers 'have maed suche yll beere I dare not medle wⁱlth them'.⁶² For all his criticism of Holt, Coke never suggested that he was corrupt.

57 For the demands made on Alcock in the summer of 1630, for example, see P.R.O., SP16/172/7, 42, 54, 56.

58 In 1642 by Parliament. See e.g. *C.S.P.D. 1641-3*, pp.430, 554, 560.

59 On Duling, see below, pp.283-4.

60 P.R.O., SP16/107/3, n.d., received 12 June 1628.

61 P.R.O., SP16/106 fo.77, Coke's diary entry, 25 June 1628.

62 P.R.O., SP16/95/89, 14 March 1628.

Indeed, in May 1628 Coke expressed his confidence in Holt, declaring that he was 'an hable & readie man'.⁶³

The charge of sloth rather than corruption was laid at the door of another of Apsley's deputies, Thomas Clarke. Clarke assumed responsibility for the day-to-day business of feeding the army and fleet when Apsley fell ill during the Ré expedition. Yet, according to an anonymous naval captain, while Apsley lay on his sickbed Clarke would 'not attend the bussinesse, but was knowne to use ye pursers most abusively, making them wayte upon him, when hee himselfe would be either gameing or feasting'. Internal evidence suggests that the author of these comments may have been Nathaniel Boteler.⁶⁴ If this was the case then it would help to explain why Boteler held such a hostile view of Apsley's deputies. Whether Clarke was as black as he was painted is open to dispute. What little evidence there is seems to suggest that Clarke was a man after Apsley's own heart. In 1628 Apsley sent him to Plymouth because he no longer trusted Sir James Bagg, in which service Clarke later claimed to have spent £2,152 of his own money.⁶⁵

The only one of the Victualler's deputies who is known to have been corrupt is Sir Thomas Button. As Admiral of the ships of the Guard, Button had enjoyed the right to victual the vessels under his command since about 1614. However, in June 1631 Button's fellow captain and subordinate, Francis Hooke, complained that Sir Thomas had embezzled £200 that he had received from the Irish Lord Justices the previous September to victual both their ships. Hooke also said that Button had sub-contracted the

63 P.R.O., SP16/105/1, 24 May 1628, Coke to Buckingham.

64 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 26051 fo.18. Clarke is not mentioned by name.

65 P.R.O., SP16/94/42, 25 Feb. 1628, Apsley to Nicholas; SP16/179/46, n.d., petition by Clarke to Privy Council. Only 2 letters written by Clarke are known to survive: SP16/104/5, 16 May 1628, Clarke to Nicholas; SP16/118/65, 13 Oct. 1628, Clarke to Coke.

victualling to one William Brooks of Bandon, who had provided meat which was 'soe ill conditioned yt it stuncke'. Hooke's men had been constrained to eat this tainted fare, and subsequently many of them had fallen ill. In view of Button's abuse of his trust, Hooke pleaded for the right to victual his own ship.⁶⁶ His request was not granted, but one month later the Admiralty ordered the Lord Justices to place the victualling of Button's ships in the hands of Sir Sampson Darrell, 'from whome we may expect, and canne Comannd, better care and p[er]formance'.⁶⁷

On the face of it, Sir Thomas Button's misconduct is evidence that the Victualler's use of deputies was an inherently flawed system. However, this was not the conclusion reached by Darrell, for he simply replaced Button with the purser Thomas Morgan.⁶⁸ The real problem for Darrell was that Button had effectively ceased to be his deputy, since Button conducted his affairs without reference to London. In other words, Button had acquired the sort of independence which the exponents of a more decentralised victualling service actually advocated. This is very revealing, for while Nathaniel Boteler argued for the need to allow each captain to victual his own crew, the Admiralty roundly condemned the fact that a captain had been allowed to provision his ship, 'the inconvenience whereof hath heretofore bene very manifest to those that have had experience therein'.⁶⁹ Thus, Button's misdemeanours were clearly not an advertisement for a decentralised victualling service of the sort envisaged by Boteler.

66 P.R.O., SP63/252/69, 10 June 1631, Hooke to Dorchester; SP63/252/70, 10 June 1631, Hooke to Nicholas.

67 P.R.O., SP63/252/96, 14 July 1631.

68 Morgan was Button's purser. He established contact with Darrell in the hope of supplanting Button at the same time that Hooke attacked Button's handling of the victualling of his ships, an act which Button described as 'treacherye': P.R.O., SP16/194/15, 16 June 1631, Button to Nicholas. Morgan was established as deputy Victualler by Oct. 1631: SP16/201/1, 1 Oct. 1631, Darrell to Admiralty.

69 See above, n.67.

Yet it would probably be a mistake to draw too many lessons about the structure of the victualling service from the affair involving Button. Button's embezzlement of government funds says more about the state of his own finances than it does about his status in relation to the Victualler. Button would probably have resorted to corruption regardless of whether the administrative system was centralised or decentralised, for the simple reason that he had been brought to the brink of bankruptcy after years of subsidising the Navy out of his own pocket.⁷⁰ Even if Button does provide evidence of the existence of the archetypal dishonest deputy, it is clear from the swiftness of the Admiralty's response that such men could only prosper if they could conceal their nefarious activities.

During the 1630s the West Country peer Lord Mohun alleged in Star Chamber that his former wartime associate, Sir James Bagg, had succeeded in doing just that. According to Mohun, between 1625 and 1628 Bagg furnished the Navy 'wⁱllth stinke & unholosome victualls such as dogg would not eate', which had accounted for 4,000 deaths during one expedition alone. Mohun also accused Sir James of having cheated his suppliers, leaving some unpaid and compounding with others to his own advantage. Lastly, he declared that Bagg had embezzled £80,000 worth of prize goods.⁷¹ These charges have subsequently been endorsed by early Stuart historians. John Forster, the Victorian biographer of Bagg's local rival, Sir John Eliot, asserted that Mohun 'was held substantially to have proved the case'.⁷² More recently, Professor Russell has stated that Bagg was 'one of the most corrupt of

70 See above, pp.153-5.

71 P.R.O., C115/M36/8439, 31 Oct. 1634, [Rossingham to Scudamore]; C115/N4/8614, 3 May 1637, Burghe to Scudamore; Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. C827 (Star Chamber proceedings) fos.48v-9, 28 April 1637; *ibid.*, fos. 59v-60, 17 May 1637. It is not known why Mohun turned against Bagg.

72 John Forster, *Sir John Eliot: A Biography, 1590-1632*, (London, 1864), 1. 204.

Buckingham's agents', a verdict echoed by Dr. Cust, who describes Bagg as representing 'the worst type of court-backed local tyrants'.⁷³

There was undoubtedly some truth in the claim that Bagg's provisions were not always of an acceptable standard. In July 1627 Apsley informed Alcock from the Ile de Ré that the victuals provided at Plymouth 'proveth most base, as heretofore it [*sic*] hath done'.⁷⁴ Writing to Buckingham from Portsmouth eleven months later, Secretary Coke declined to comment on the quality of Bagg's supplies, except to say that 'what complaincts are here made of the victuals sent from Plimouth I wil not troble your Grace to relate'.⁷⁵ The following August the Portsmouth Victualler drew up a table listing the quantity of defective victuals received from Plymouth which Coke had ordered him to replace. These included no less than 515 barrels of beer and 5,054 two-pound pieces of beef.⁷⁶

The main line of defence adopted by Bagg, both then and later, was that he was an agent for paying out money in order to procure victuals rather than a supplier in his own right. In August 1627 he protested to Coke that he was no provider 'other then by disbursinge my money, assisting and Countynancing Mr Buxton that specifically was sent for that purpose', and he added that 'whilst I am reputed a victualer the faults of others are made myne'.⁷⁷ This plea found sympathy with a number of the judges in

73 Conrad Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments: History of England, 1509-1660*, (Oxford, 1971), p.288; Richard Cust, *The Forced Loan and English Politics, 1626-1628*, (Oxford, 1987), p.202.

74 P.R.O., SP16/71/56, 20 July 1627. See also SP16/73/26, 4 Aug. 1627, Manchester to Charles I.

75 P.R.O., SP16/107/3, received 12 June 1628, Coke to Buckingham.

76 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C160/9), 9 Aug. 1628.

77 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64892 fo.93v, 17 Aug. 1627. 'Mr. Buxton' was William Buxton, who was sent by Buckingham to assist Bagg in March 1627: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.28v, 10 March 1627, Buckingham's instructions to Buxton.

Bagg's case, among them Lord Chief Justice Bramston, who concluded that the provision of bad victuals could not be fastened on Bagg, because 'there weare many victuale [sic] & all sente to plymoth & Sr J. distributed it'.⁷⁸

Many of the claims made about the poor quality of the victuals bought and supplied by Bagg were either exaggerated or false. One of the witnesses produced by Lord Mohun to support his case was a ship gunner named Armado Swartridge. Swartridge claimed that about eighty members of his crew died in 1628 because of rotten victuals, and that six butts of beer and three barrels of beef were consequently thrown overboard. When delivering his verdict in Star Chamber, however, Lord Cottington described Swartridge as 'a meere rogue and counterfeite' after it was heard that his ship 'went not to Rochell voiage' and had contained 'but 50 men'. Cottington went on to state that, even if Bagg had supplied the bad victuals Swartridge described, 'yet the quantitie is but small, under 200li worth'. Another of the witnesses produced by Lord Mohun and torn apart by Bagg's defence counsel was a boatswain named Thomas Hockett. Hockett claimed that many mariners had mutinied at Plymouth in 1626 because their victuals were inedible. However, Hockett was evidently confused, because the mutiny to which he referred occurred in March 1628. Moreover, Admiral Mervyn and the former naval captain Sir Francis Sydenham, both of whom had been present at the time, testified that the mutiny had occurred for no other reason than that the mutineers had been taken from their beds, impressed into naval service, and then held under guard at the guildhall.⁷⁹

Forster treated the case against Bagg as a moral victory for Lord Mohun, yet the evidence Mohun produced amounted to little more than a tissue of

78 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. C827 fos.80v-1, 2 June 1637.

79 *Ibid.*, fos. 63,72v,76v. For an account of the mutiny of 21 March 1628, see Manwaring, *The Life and Works of Sir Henry Mainwaring*, 1. 188.

lies, distortions and half truths. In fact, not only did Mohun lose the case, but no less than thirteen of the sixteen judges who pronounced judgement in June 1637 found in Bagg's favour. Part of the reason for this may have been the King's known sympathy for Bagg.⁸⁰ However, there were clearly those among the judges who felt strongly about their decision to acquit the defendant. Sir Thomas Jermyn, the King's Vice-Chamberlain, declared that there was 'not one thinge done by Blaglg of purpose to deceive or abuse the kinge', while Cottington concluded that Bagg had done the King 'great service'. The Earl of Manchester, too, reminded Mohun in his verdict that he himself had once said that 'noe prince in christendome had better sub[ject], nor duke better serv[ant], then Blaglg'.⁸¹

The vigour with which Bagg was said to have pursued his naval employments is amply confirmed in the correspondence of various naval officials. In 1626 Pennington described Bagg as 'woundrous Industrious to do all things for his Ma[gesties] & my lord Duke's benefitte'.⁸² This view was shared by Sir Henry Mervyn. 'His care to expedite your Grace's desires', he told

80 P.R.O., SP16/361/55, [15 June 1637], Rossingham newsletter; P.R.O., C115/N4/8615, 17 May 1637, Burgh to Scudamore.

81 For the verdicts, which are very detailed, see Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. C827 fos.76v-90. Cottington's judgement was not solely coloured by the evidence relating to Bagg, but was also influenced by considerations of what might happen if Bagg was found guilty. Thus, he posed the rhetorical question 'will any be a victualer if he shall be sentenced for a peece of stinkinge beefe?' There were other judges whose verdicts in favour of Bagg were more cautious than those of Manchester, Cottington & Jermyn. Coke pointed out that it was usual in mutinies to blame either pay or victuals, 'therefore not sentence but on very cleere p[ro]oofe'. Sir Henry Vane deplored the fact that Bagg had been slow to submit his accounts, but he chose not to interpret this cynically. Archbishop Laud was critical of some incautious words used by Bagg to seamen who complained about the quality of their food - that they should eat the food they were given or eat the planks of their ships - but he would not censure it as a crime. Those judges who found against Bagg were Chief Justice Finch ('Lo[r]d Mohun hath done nothinge yt deserves censure'), Lord Keeper Coventry & the Earl of Pembroke.

82 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64887 fo.35, 17 Jan. 1626, Pennington to Coke.

Buckingham, 'easily complies to anything that may tend thereto'.⁸³ Sir Henry Mainwaring, too, thought Bagg 'most dexterous in his undertakings', describing him to Buckingham as 'sine qua non'.⁸⁴ In 1627 one deputy Victualler contrasted the assistance he had received from Sir James, who had been forthcoming 'both in money and Creditt', with the backwardness of Bagg's fellow Vice-Admiral, Sir John Drake.⁸⁵ One of the officials who spoke in Bagg's defence in 1637 was Edward Nicholas. Harking back to the summer of 1627, when Buckingham's army was short of supplies on the Ile de Ré, Nicholas observed that Bagg had 'streyned himselfe to the uttermost' in providing the Duke with badly needed victuals, and that 'many had p[er]lished yf he had not sent supply of live oxen to Rees'.⁸⁶ On one occasion, in October 1627, Bagg sent a small quantity of provisions to Buckingham without any apparent prompting, a gesture which impressed the Duchess of Buckingham's steward:

I can not recom[m]end unto you to much the diligence of your frind, (for soe I verily perswad my self he is), in serving of my lord's necessity; he is both active, able & quick in his dispatches. I could wish his grace had many such servents all alonge that sea coast.⁸⁷

This fund of admiration for Bagg's wartime efforts paid dividends in his legal battle with Lord Mohun. When in 1634 he brought a counter suit against Mohun for libel, he was able to muster six of the foremost naval officers of his day to vouch for his diligence, industry and willingness to

83 P.R.O., SP16/87/29, 22 Dec. 1627.

84 P.R.O., SP16/79/62, 29 Sept. 1627, Mainwaring to Nicholas; SP16/96/2, 23 March 1628, Mainwaring to Buckingham.

85 P.R.O., SP16/98/94, 31 March 1628, Buxton to Nicholas.

86 Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. C827 fo.73v. See also P.R.O., SP16/73/20, 3 Aug. 1627, Bagg to 'your honor'; SP16/74/17, 16 Aug. 1627, Bagg to Nicholas.

87 P.R.O., SP16/81/59, 16 Oct. 1627, William Bolde to Nicholas. The Earl of Holland, who commanded the fleet which was being prepared to relieve Buckingham, also commented on Bagg's diligence: SP16/82/58, 22 Oct. 1627.

place his own financial resources at the Crown's disposal.⁸⁸

Bagg's fingers were caught firmly in the till only once. In January 1628 Henry Holt complained that Bagg had confiscated and sold a cargo of salt aboard the *Costly* of Dover which Holt had bought for salting naval victuals. Although Bagg claimed that he had Buckingham's authorisation, he refused to show Holt his warrant.⁸⁹ In fact, Buckingham had earlier heard of Bagg's detention of the ship and ordered her release.⁹⁰

However, Bagg's embezzlement of the salt was probably not inspired by greed, but stemmed from his financial commitment to the King's service and the Exchequer's inability to reimburse him. A few weeks later, Bagg pleaded with Buckingham to preserve his credit with the Customs Farmers, from whom he had borrowed heavily for the war effort.⁹¹ The immediate upshot of the episode was that Sir Allen Apsley became thoroughly distrustful of Bagg, sending Thomas Clarke to Plymouth and refusing to accept any more of Bagg's bills. It was perhaps this affair, too, which gave rise to the epithet 'the bottomless Bagg', which was first used in April 1628.⁹² Yet Buckingham evidently accepted Bagg's apology for his offence, and he undoubtedly felt sympathy for his plight.⁹³ The Duke recognised the extent to which Bagg had put himself in debt for the Navy, and he endeavoured to ensure that Bagg's finances were not permitted to collapse.⁹⁴ The scale of Bagg's financial commitment to the Navy was indeed impressive. In 1630 he calculated that he

88 P.R.O., SP16/266/59, 29 April 1634, Coke's notes; Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. C827 fo.72v.

89 P.R.O., SP16/90/6, 2 Jan. 1628, Holt to Nicholas. See also SP16/90/36, 8 Jan. 1628, Apsley to Buckingham.

90 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.161v, 17 Dec. 1627, Buckingham to Bagg.

91 P.R.O., SP16/90/122, 18 Jan. 1628, Bagg to Nicholas; SP16/91/35, 23 Jan. 1628, Bagg to Buckingham; SP16/96/38, 17 March 1628, Bagg to Nicholas.

92 *Commons Debates, 1628*, II. 246. The term was used by Sir Francis Seymour on 2 April.

93 For Bagg's apology, see P.R.O., SP16/91/54, 25 Jan. 1628.

94 P.R.O., SP16/113/3, 16 Aug. 1628, Buckingham to Pye.

had disbursed more than £51,609, of which he was still owed over £26,491.⁹⁵ This figure was challenged by Lord Mohun in court. However, even if it was inflated, it is beyond question that Bagg dug deeply into his own pocket.

Perhaps Bagg's most serious failing was that he omitted to keep adequate records of his financial activity, thus laying himself open to the charge of corruption. On the face of it, this was surprising in a man who had been commended to Buckingham in 1625 for having kept faultless Vice-Admiralty accounts.⁹⁶ Yet in the hectic war years of the 1620s, the documentation necessary to provide proof of expenditure was sometimes the last thing on the mind of an overworked Sir James Bagg, whose distance from London made it impossible to reconcile immediate naval requirements with the need to receive proper authorisation. Typical of the man was a letter written to Nicholas in which he explained that he had furnished two ships with stores 'wⁱllthout estimate, warrant or money, for w^hilch...I hope rather to receave a reward then Chidinge'.⁹⁷ On another occasion, Bagg implicitly criticised the Navy Commissioners for requiring him to produce authorisation for having disbursed money to save two naval warships which were nearly wrecked. Of course, Bagg did not have any authority, except 'my heart's dutie to preserve his Majestty's shippes'.⁹⁸ Both Buckingham and Charles appreciated loyalty which, in a crisis, dispensed with niceties of form. When it came to settling Bagg's account, Charles waived the Exchequer's normal accounting procedure on the grounds that Bagg had 'had an eye rather to the...good of the service than delayed the same for want of warrants or

95 P.R.O., SP16/172/109, 31 Aug. 1630, Charles I to Exchequer. For Bagg's repayment, see P.R.O., E403/3040, n.f., warrants dated 6 Nov. 1630 & 21 Aug. 1632; P.R.O., E404/234, unnumbered warrant, 31 March 1631; P.R.O., SP16/222/60, abstract of repayments, n.d.

96 P.R.O., SP14/185/80, 19 March 1625, Buckingham's estate commissioners to Buckingham. 97 P.R.O., SP16/84/47, 9 Nov. 1627, Bagg to Nicholas.

98 P.R.O., SP16/110/50, 22 July 1628, Bagg to Buckingham.

taking care...for his own formal discharge'.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, it was probably his failure to attend to the paperwork which landed Bagg in trouble in the Exchequer Court of Pleas. He was prosecuted in the early 1630s by Margaret and Thomas Bespitch, who had been two of his suppliers in 1627 and 1628. They claimed to have been underpaid, but Bagg retorted that they had actually received £188 more than they were owed, which he demanded that they repay. However, he confessed that he could not 'precisely prove payment', and therefore he sought to have the suit heard as an equity case. The outcome of the affair is uncertain, but the Bespitches may have proved unsuccessful in their suit, for they were still trying to get the money they claimed was owed to them in 1637.¹⁰⁰

It is ultimately impossible to establish for certain that Bagg was entirely innocent of the charges brought against him by both the Bespitches and Lord Mohun. However, the case against him is far from convincing. In the first place, Lord Mohun relied upon testimony which was shown to be deeply flawed. Secondly, it is scarcely credible that Bagg, who almost bankrupted himself to bolster the Exchequer, and whose industry was praised, not merely in Star Chamber, but also in the despatches of naval officers, was really guilty of having swindled the Crown of large sums of money, of the disappearance of which there is no evidence. It is true that Bagg was excessively sycophantic towards Buckingham, as Dr. Cust has pointed out. However, sycophancy is not in itself a mark of dishonesty. In

99 P.R.O., SP16/170/50, 12 July 1630, Charles I to Weston & Cottington. Bagg's accounts were audited in Nov. 1631: P.R.O., AO1/1798/372. The only accounts kept by Bagg which are known to survive relate to impressment charges: Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. A210 fos.11-27.

100 P.R.O., E112/170/65, (depositions, 7 Feb. 1632) I am grateful to Dr. Todd Gray for this reference. See also P.R.O., E134/9 CHAS I. Mich.61 (depositions, 17 Oct. 1633); P.R.O., E125/14 fos.15r-v, 14 May 1633. For the Bespitches in 1637, see Bodl. Libr., MS. Rawl. C827 fo.61.

Bagg it may demonstrate nothing more than his extreme loyalty, as well as showing that he knew on which side his bread was buttered. Far from being one of the most corrupt figures of his day, Bagg was probably one of the most capable. In the aftermath of the affair involving the *Costly* of Dover, Sir Thomas Button - who found himself at the centre of a remarkably similar case the following year - confessed to having heard 'strandge reports' of Bagg. But seeing him at work, his doubts vanished: 'I saye hee is as fitt a man to be cheerisht as any man I have ever knowen, and as far foorth as ether his purse or creditt will give him leave; he is the forrist [*first*] to doe it that ever I knew'.¹⁰¹ Few of Bagg's contemporaries in naval administration were ever accorded quite such an accolade.

* * * * *

During the war years at least, the financial problems experienced by the Victualler were not exacerbated by the behaviour either of his deputies or by Sir James Bagg. Like Apsley himself, Bagg, Henry Holt and Thomas Clarke all committed their own resources to the Navy. So too did Apsley's agent John Clifton, who in 1626 spent hundreds of pounds of his own money in helping to victual a squadron of ships under Pennington at Plymouth.¹⁰² The willingness of such men to risk their own fortunes in order that the Navy should be better served amply testifies to their dedication.

IV. Allowances

Each seaman was entitled to a daily allowance of one pound of biscuit (sometimes termed bread) and one gallon of beer. On Sundays, Mondays,

101 P.R.O., SP16/93/16, 12 Feb. 1628, Button to Nicholas.

102 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64888 fo.83, 12 April 1626, Pennington to Coke. Clifton borrowed £340 from Sir John Wolstenholme for victualling these ships: P.R.O., E125/16 fos.325r-v.

Tuesdays and Thursdays he also received two pounds of salt beef, alternatively one pound of bacon or pork plus a pint of pease. On Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays seamen were given a quarter of one stockfish, an eighth of a pound of butter, and a quarter of a pound of cheese.¹⁰³ In its quantity, this daily ration was described by Nathaniel Boteler as 'very transcendent'. In particular, the 'bread' allowance was 'more than can be eaten'.¹⁰⁴

The generosity of the naval ration was often more apparent than real, as Boteler himself complained. As commander of the *Nonsuch* in 1628 he had often found 'sometimes twenty, sometimes thirty of the common mariners... waiting at my cabin door...with their beef and pork in their hands, to let me see how small the pieces were, and how much under the quantity and weight proportioned'. Boteler was unsure who to blame, but he asserted that either the meat cutters were guilty of fraud or the meat had shrunk 'from the ill choice of beasts, as being lean or old'.¹⁰⁵ Boteler was not alone in claiming that the meat allowance was sometimes too small. In August 1626 the mariners at Portsmouth were on the brink of desertion because their beef and pork was 'unequally and small cutt', while in November 1636 Capt. Kirke of the *Repulse* alleged that each of the hogsheads aboard his ship had wanted thirty or forty pounds of meat.¹⁰⁶

Sir William Monson was in no doubt that under weight meat was an abuse which stemmed from 'those that have the oversight of it'.¹⁰⁷ In some cases this was undoubtedly true. However, even if meat was properly cut in the

103 P.R.O., SP14/11 fos.16-17 (Victuallers' contract, 1623).

104 *Boteler's Dialogues*, p.56. In 1635 Alcock offered to reduce the beef ration to 1½ pounds per day per man if he was made Victualler, on the grounds that this was the allowance common among merchantmen: P.R.O., SP16/298/28.

105 *Boteler's Dialogues*, pp.56-7.

106 P.R.O., SP16/33/28, 3 Aug. 1626, victualling surveyors to Buckingham; SP16/336/75.

107 *Monson's Tracts*, iii. 380-1.

slaughterhouse, it was bound to shrink in the preservation process and when it was cooked. In 1637 John Crane asserted that meat normally lost twelve per cent of its volume through salting. This did not explain why six pieces of beef aboard the *Triumph*, which should have weighed twenty-four pounds, weighed just eleven pounds. Crane, however, pointed out that, on the admission of the purser, this had been the weight of the meat *after* it had been boned and boiled.¹⁰⁸

Another common complaint was that the seamen were defrauded of their full beer ration. The Victualler was bound by his contract to provide beer measure rather than the smaller wine measure. However, in 1636 it was alleged that the cans provided by the purser of the *James* held only a wine gallon of liquid. The purser admitted that his cans were too small, but he said this was because the Victualler only issued beer in wine measure, which Crane denied. It is impossible to determine the truth in this particular dispute, but one contemporary believed that the issue of short measures was a favourite tactic of pursers.¹⁰⁹

The trade in pursers' places undoubtedly helped to motivate such deceits, as Monson observed, but it is unclear how common it was for pursers or other members of the crew to misappropriate victuals.¹¹⁰ Writing about the Navy in the Seven Years' War, Dr. Nicholas Rodger has argued persuasively that the very obvious nature of the crime, and the preparedness of the Navy to investigate complaints, militated against widespread theft. As he has observed, for embezzlement to remain undetected required the improbable silence of the entire crew.¹¹¹ To some extent, these considerations were

108 P.R.O., SP16/349/67, 9 March 1637, Crane to [Admiralty].

109 Longleat, Coventry MS. vol. 117 fo.34v.

110 For the trade in places, see above, p.163. For Monson's remarks, see *Monson's Tracts*, iv. 146-7.

111 Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp.94-5.

true of the Caroline Navy too. Just how difficult it was to keep other members of the crew quiet is demonstrated by the information presented to the Navy Board by the master and purser of the *St. Anthony*, prize, against their captain in June 1628. Informing Buckingham that the captain had illicitly sold some of his ship's victuals, the Principal Officers observed that he had made the mistake of not sharing the proceeds of his ill-gotten gains with his fellow officers. Nevertheless, they added that they were under no illusion that in time the theft would have been detected.¹¹² Nine years later one of the captains serving in the Sallee expedition sold some of his victuals at Cadiz, and then tried unsuccessfully to silence the purser by bullying him.¹¹³ An even more outrageous example of fraud was uncovered in 1633 aboard the *Ninth Whelp*, when the captain discovered that one the quartermasters had connived with a Dublin cooper to substitute bad meat for the choice pieces, so that his crew was 'almost poisoned with it'. Lord Deputy Wentworth duly promised Coke that he would see them hanged 'if there be law for it, or at least so pillory and slit their Ears as others shall take little Pleasure to serve the King so hereafter'.¹¹⁴

The ease with which such abuses were detected did not prevent them from occurring, however. One reason for this may be that the Navy was not particularly good at finding the culprits. This is suggested by an affair involving two pursers which dragged on for five years. In October 1626 victuals worth £250 went missing while they were being transferred from the *Vanguard*, which was leaky, to the *Swiftsure*. An initial investigation in June 1628 of the *Swiftsure*'s purser, John Wright, led to his suspension pending an enquiry. This does not seem to have been established until

112 P.R.O., SP16/108/55, 30 June 1628.

113 P.R.O., SP16/369/26, 5 Oct. 1637, Carteret to Nicholas.

114 *Strafforde's Letters*, i. 135, 23 Oct. 1633.

January 1629, perhaps because of the frenetic naval activity of the previous year, and because of the change in administration following Buckingham's murder.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, by late October 1630 nothing had been achieved, which led Secretary Coke to observe that the Navy Board had been remiss.¹¹⁶ Coke's annoyance is understandable, but he appears to have wilfully disregarded the complexities of the case. For Wright had complicated matters by implicating the purser of the *Vanguard*, John Wriothsesley. Shortly before Coke made his remarks, the Principal Officers had held numerous meetings about the matter, but 'some times one partie comes [and] the other failes, sometimes they leave ther certificates behind them'. Even when the relevant documents were produced by both pursers, subscribed by the chief officers of their ships, it was discovered that many had 'sett ther hands to bothe certificates, iust Contradictinge themselves'.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, a verdict was somehow reached, and Wriothsesley was condemned.¹¹⁸ However, he appealed and produced further evidence demonstrating that Wright had lied. Fresh investigation revealed that there had indeed been a miscarriage of justice, but the investigators added uneasily that the business was 'still in a thick mist'.¹¹⁹ Eventually, Wright was removed as purser of the *Swiftsure*, although doubts as to his guilt clearly remained.¹²⁰

115 P.R.O., SP16/39/17, c.7 Nov. 1626, certificate by John Wriothsesley; SP16/107/72, 18 June 1628, Slingsby & Fleming to Nicholas; SP16/139/26, c. 28 Jan. 1629, Edward Goodfellow to Admiralty, plus enclosures; SP16/139/27, n.d., petition by Wriothsesley.

116 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64901 fo.78v, (report by Coke, 30 Oct. 1630).

117 *Ibid.*, fo.45, 5 Oct. 1630, Slingsby to Coke.

118 P.R.O., SP16/175/50, 13 Nov. 1630, Wriothsesley to Admiralty; SP16/177/16, 17 Dec. 1630, Wriothsesley to Admiralty; SP16/182/57, 15 Jan. 1631, Wriothsesley to Admiralty.

119 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fos.197-8, 26 May 1631, Digby & Fleming to Admiralty.

120 In a separate incident in 1627, Wriothsesley was accused by the master of his ship of having defrauded the crew of a third of their butter

The Wright affair was exceptionally complex, yet similar difficulties in apportioning the blame for theft were encountered in 1629. In October Sir Henry Mervyn informed the Admiralty that a fresh supply of victuals which had recently been delivered to the ships of the Channel squadron would not last as long as was intended because some had been stolen.¹²¹ By the end of November his crews were on half their allowance, causing him to exclaim that 'I am wearie to complaine of Pursers who disorder by theire cheatinge the whole service, yett go unpunished'.¹²² The finger of suspicion subsequently pointed to two pursers, John Mason and Thomas Waldoe. The case against Waldoe may have been proved, for in February 1630 he petitioned the Admiralty to be permitted to surrender his place.¹²³ However, it evidently proved more difficult to establish Mason's guilt. Mason had been thrown into prison by his captain for allegedly stealing five tuns of beer, but he produced a certificate signed by the deputy Victualler at Portsmouth and the ship's officers which apparently disproved the captain's accusation. In turn, the captain pronounced the certificate forged. Thoroughly perplexed, the Navy Board recommended Mason's sequestration pending an enquiry.¹²⁴ Nothing more was heard of the matter, but apparently Mason retained his pursership until 1635, when he was convicted of an undisclosed felony.¹²⁵

Pursers were required to keep accounts of their receipts and expenditure.¹²⁶ Yet the difficulties encountered in convicting Wright and Mason

allowance: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C159/3), n.d., accusations by Mr. Nelme.

121 P.R.O., SP16/150/42, 9 Oct. 1629.

122 P.R.O., SP16/152/60, 29 Nov. 1629, Mervyn to Nicholas.

123 P.R.O., SP16/160/73, [13 Feb.] 1630, Waldoe to Admiralty.

124 P.R.O., SP16/150/70, 16 Oct. 1629, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

125 P.R.O., SP16/285/3, 16 March 1635, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

126 Very few survive. Probably the fullest are the accounts of Thomas Willoughby, purser of the *Blessing* of London for 1625-6: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9299 fos.25-7.

demonstrate that the record-keeping upon which the investigative process relied was inadequate. Indeed, the only purser who is certainly known to have been dismissed for theft was Wright. When the risk of being caught was so slight, it was hardly surprising if pursers cheated their shipmates.

V. Procurement

Little is known about the day-to-day procurement of victuals from suppliers. The Victualler was a contractor, and the archival consequence of privatisation is that the internal papers of his department have disappeared. Although the Victualler submitted annual accounts to the Exchequer for inspection, these are primarily a record of the money the Victualler was allowed by the King, rather than a detailed record of purchase. The Victualler was contracted to provide victuals at so many pence per day, and this rate, multiplied by the number of seamen employed and the length of time which they served, largely determined the amount of money which he received and therefore the type of information contained in these accounts. The names of suppliers and the quantities of foodstuffs they provided were details which were irrelevant to the government's financial record. Yet, despite the poverty of the archive, it is possible to offer some general observations about the procurement of naval victuals.

It was important for the Victualler to buy victuals at the right time of year. However, this was not always appreciated by the government. It was difficult to obtain meat during the winter months, yet in December 1625 Apsley was told to begin laying in victuals for a fleet to reinforce the ships already at sea under Sir Edward Cecil. Apsley protested to Coke that, even paying in cash, 'I could not git Beif and porke this week at the price I boughte the weeke beefore by xx in the hundred', and he added that 'all

England cannot yeld the proportions of victualls your honnor hath propounded'.¹²⁷ It was also important to obtain victuals seasonally if they were to be properly preserved. Beer brewed in hot weather was likely to turn sour quickly ¹²⁸, while meat would not take salt 'in the prime heat of a summer'.¹²⁹ One reason why much of the meat provided for the Cadiz expedition in 1625 proved so corrupt may have been that some of the cattle was not slaughtered until late May and early June.¹³⁰ This was not the Victualler's fault, for on 20 April he warned the Lord Treasurer, to whom he looked for money, that 'if all the flesh bee not kild, and the Beere not brewed by the middle of the next moneth...to make any such pirolvisions afterwards will not only hazard the losse of the victualls and the lives of the men, but the overthrowe of the whole voyage'.¹³¹

In theory, the Victualler was obliged to buy victuals at the market price, although he was only permitted to charge the King the rate specified in his contract. Nevertheless, there were occasions when the government intervened to control prices, for otherwise the Victualler might not have been able to buy what he needed. In March 1625 the Privy Council rebuked the Deputy Lieutenants of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire for allowing Apsley's agent, William Buxton, to be impeded by those who had been 'so

127 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64886 fo.36r-v, 10 Dec. 1625, Apsley to Coke; H.M.C., *11th Rept.*, app. i. p.39, 14/24 Dec. 1625, Salvetti to Grand Duke of Tuscany.

128 K.A.O., Sackville MS. U269/1/ON789, 21 July 1623, Navy Commissioners to Middlesex.

129 *Boteler's Dialogues*, p.57. One anonymous writer disputed this claim, asserting that 'myselfe have caused Beefe to bee kild & salted in Barbary in the hot moneth of August, which have served my company fower moneths after, without any one peece of meate proving badd, Ergo it is feazable if care bee taken': Longleat, Coventry MS. vol. 117 fo.38v.

130 H.M.C., *11th Rept.*, app. i, p.20, 3/13 June 1625, Salvetti to Grand Duke of Tuscany; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C174/16), 1 June 1625, victualling surveyors to Navy Commissioners. For the Cadiz expedition, see below, pp.294-298.

131 Victoria & Albert Museum, Forster MS. F48. G1.73.

curious, vaine and bould, as they did not onely give hindrance and stoppe to his Majesties service in denying to suffer him to carry away what he had bought...but since that have rayased the price exceedingly to exact upon his Majestie and hinder his service'.¹³² In 1628 Coke sought an order from the Privy Council to force the authorities at Portsmouth to reduce prices to the level paid by the purveyors who supplied the King's Household.¹³³ The government's interest in the level of prices during the war years of the 1620s meant that it was prepared to shop around. Coke recorded in his diary in 1628 that it was better to buy beef at Plymouth because it was 'dearest at London'.¹³⁴ Conversely, Sir James Bagge recommended to Buckingham that, owing to a shortage of wheat in Plymouth, he should buy grain for the Navy from a Chichester merchant 'at prices more easie then here'.¹³⁵

Just as the government might endeavour to control the price of victuals, so too it sometimes afforded the Victualler the right of pre-emption. By his contract, the Victualler was entitled to commissions under the Great Seal if he was required to victual more than 3,000 men at any one time. This same right was extended to Darrell after the harvest failed in the summer of 1630.¹³⁶ Writing to Cottingham from London the following March, Darrell declared that 'corne is growne so scarce about this Citty yt I can hardly have so great a p[ro]portion of Bisquet as I shall need for his Majesties service'.¹³⁷ Darrell not only needed commissions to buy up wheat in various parts of the country, he also needed letters from the

132 A.P.C. 1625-6, p.10.

133 P.R.O., SP16/116/53, 22 Aug. 1628, Coke to Conway.

134 P.R.O., SP16/106 fo.78v.

135 P.R.O., SP16/100/36, 4 April 1628.

136 P.R.O., SP16/188/12, 2 April 1631, Darrell to Nicholas; P.R.O., C231/5, p.54, 20 April 1631. I am grateful for this last reference to Lynn Hulse. Darrell later complained that the commissions he had been granted did not extend to Ireland & excluded barley: SP16/196/74, received 15 July 1631, Darrell to [Admiralty].

137 Burlington House, Soc. of Antiquaries, MS. 203 fo.138, n.d., unsigned.

Privy Council to transport it undisturbed from areas where there was dearth. However, there were limits to what the government could do in the face of a starving populace. Although the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports was told to prevent the flow of wheat to London from being disrupted, Darrell's granary at Shoreham was subsequently raided.¹³⁸

The Victualler did not always need cash to buy victuals for the Navy, but it cost ten per cent more to buy victuals on credit.¹³⁹ The expensive nature of credit was not the only reason for the Victualler to want to pay in cash, however, for certain foodstuffs were normally only obtainable in exchange for hard currency. In 1626 Apsley told the Council of War that beef, pork and bacon were always bought with ready money, 'beeing of that nature'.¹⁴⁰ The general truth of this statement is reflected in the list of Apsley's creditors dated 10 December 1630, which included eight brewers but only three butchers.¹⁴¹ Among Apsley's creditors, the supplier who stands out as having advanced the most to the victualling department was the London fishmonger Mark Quested. In 1630 Quested claimed that he was owed £1,466 6s 10d by Apsley's estate. By 1634 his failure to recover this money may have forced him to sell some of his land.¹⁴²

138 *A.P.C. 1630-1*, p.226; *H.M.C., 13th Rept.*, app. iv. 194, Dering to Cinque Ports; *P.R.O.*, SP16/535/37, n.d., Darrell to Privy Council; *Brit. Libr.*, Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C101/18), n.d., Jan./Feb. 1633?, Darrell to [Privy Council]; *P.R.O.*, PC2/42 fo.220, 22 Feb. 1633, Privy Council to 2 Sussex J.P.s.

139 *P.R.O.*, SP16/105/80.1, [30 May] 1628, Apsley to Charles I.

140 *P.R.O.*, SP16/28 fo.9v, 13 June 1626. It is not clear from Apsley's letter why this should have been the case.

141 *P.R.O.*, SP16/176/53. The butchers listed were Robert Ferriby (of Rochester), [Matthew] Palmer & John Clerk. The brewers were Edmund Morgan, Thomas Clee, Nicholas & Robert Houghton, Henry Fazakerly, Abraham Corsellis, Rombold Jacobson (listed as a brewer in *P.R.O.*, PC2/43 fo.194v), George Freeman & Matthew Allen (of Weymouth).

142 *P.R.O.*, C54/3003/24, 9 Oct. 1634, indenture between Quested & George Robinson. However, Quested was still providing fish to the Navy in 1637: *P.R.O.*, SP16/363/39.1.

The victualling department was not only concerned to buy up foodstuffs for the Navy; in the case of meat and biscuit it was also involved in their preparation. In addition to the Victualler's lodgings, the Abbey of Graces contained a slaughterhouse, a cutting house, a salthouse, a bakehouse, a pastry, a workhouse for the coopers, together with various storehouses and rented shops. However, this complex included no facilities for brewing beer. As the brewhouse at Portsmouth was in a seriously dilapidated condition this meant that the Navy had to buy its beer.¹⁴³ Apsley's biggest supplier was Peter Lennart, who owned a brewhouse in East Smithfield, close to the Navy's victualling houses.¹⁴⁴ In 1625 Lennart was contracted to brew 600 tuns of beer for the Navy, which was twice as much as anyone else.¹⁴⁵ Another important supplier was John Duling, a former naval purser whose brewhouse was located at Rochester. More than half the beer ordered by the Navy in April 1629 was supplied by Lennart and Duling.¹⁴⁶

The Victualler evidently provided cask for his suppliers, although it was not always easy to lay hands on enough pipestaves and much had to be imported from Ireland. However, the government allowed the Victualler the right of pre-emption before granting export licences to pipestave manufacturers.¹⁴⁷ When the Victualler was forced to buy a large quantity of cask for immediate service, it may have been difficult to ensure quality.

143 See above, p.257. There were no facilities for making cheese either.

144 P.R.O., PROB11/163 fo.220v, Lennart's will, 10 Dec. 1632.

145 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., C159/6), n.d., c.March 1625, Coke's notes. Lennart's name is rendered as 'Leonard'.

146 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.163, notes on victualling, 28 April 1629.

147 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under Buckingham', p.248; *A.P.C. 1625-6*, pp.234-5, 355, 410; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64885 fo.37, 6 Nov. 1625, Apsley to Coke; *A.P.C. 1626*, pp.39-40, 336, 445; *A.P.C. 1630-1*, pp.198, 143-4; P.R.O., SP16/270/54, 30 June 1634, Darrell to Meautys; SP16/311/10, 2 Jan. 1636, Crane to Admiralty; P.R.O., SP63/255/88, 26 Jan. 1636, Wentworth to Admiralty; SP16/316/5, 13 March 1636, Crane to Admiralty.

Thus, the surveyors appointed to inspect the victuals provided for the Cadiz expedition reported finding a great deal of sub-standard cask, which they attributed to 'the great quantities of all sorts, made in a short tyme, & a great p[ar]lte made of greene stuff'.¹⁴⁸

Once the Victualler had provided and prepared his supplies, they were ready to be delivered. However, speedy delivery was by no means guaranteed, as we shall see.

VI. Delivery and Stowage

Many of the problems which arose from delivering victuals to the Navy's ships were beyond the control of the Victualler. One of the most serious handicaps was the lack of a naval transport service, for the department was wholly dependent upon private vessels to carry its provisions to the Navy's ships. In 1628 Apsley declared that 'I fynd fyve tymes more difficultie to git yt transported then to make the provision'. Many of the ships that had been pressed into service by the Navy Board for him to use had either been discharged or had slipped away.¹⁴⁹ In April 1635 the Admiralty ordered the prosecution of a number of pressed hoymen who had deserted.¹⁵⁰ Four months later the Navy Board, which assumed temporary responsibility for victualling the First Ship Money Fleet after Darrell's death, explained that the reason they had not despatched a fresh supply of victuals to Lindsey's ships was that they had 'founde it a greate worke to procure so many vessells as would serve to transport it'.¹⁵¹

148 Brit. Libr., Add. MS., uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., App.14/13, n.f., victualling surveyors to Coke, n.d. [May 1625]). On the activities of these surveyors, see below, p.294.

149 P.R.O., SP16/112/45, 6 Aug. 1628, Apsley to Nicholas.

150 P.R.O., SP16/264 fo.119, 29 April 1635, Admiralty to Dr. Rives.

151 P.R.O., SP16/296/50, 29 Aug. 1635, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

Just as the Victualler was reliant upon privately owned vessels to convey his supplies, so too he was dependent upon the weather. Bad weather frequently delayed the arrival of hoys, and sometimes they did not reach the ships at all. The *Charitie* hoy was driven by a tempest into Helvoetsluys in 1634 with the loss of a cable, her anchors and boat.¹⁵² In rough seas it might be too difficult or dangerous for a hoy to unload her cargo, even if she reached her destination. The captain of the *Adventure* reported in May 1629 that a hoy carrying fresh victuals had arrived six days earlier, 'but the weather hath beene soe extraordinarie fowle yt she dirst not ley us on bord to unlade, but was forced into Margat peere'.¹⁵³ Captains were the first to admit that the Victualler was helpless in the face of stormy conditions. 'If there had been anie iust cause of complaint against the victualler's diligence', Mervyn told the Admiralty in November 1636, 'I should have beene much to blame not to have given y^lour Lo^rdshilps notice of it as an iust excuse of my staye, but the extremitie of weather whilch hathe beene the cause thereof can not bee prevented'.¹⁵⁴ On one occasion, Admiralty shortsightedness served to compound the atrocious weather which disrupted the delivery of fresh victuals to the Channel squadron. Writing to Nicholas in September 1633, Pennington grumbled that he wished 'yt ther Lo^rdshilps would...not put of ye sendinge of our supplyes thus till ye last day for wee have many timis suche weather at this time of the yere'.¹⁵⁵ Nicholas agreed, and he lamented the fact that

152 P.R.O., E351/2434, n.f., payment to Peter Earely.

153 P.R.O., SP16/142/88, 15 May 1629, Mennes to Nicholas. In Dec. 1632 Richard Plumleigh reported that the weather in the Downs was so bad that it took 2 weeks before some hoys were unloaded: Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64905 fo.92, 19 Dec. 1632, Plumleigh to Coke.

154 P.R.O., SP16/335/52, 13 Nov. 1636, Mervyn to Admiralty.

155 P.R.O., SP16/246/61, 23 Sept. 1633, Pennington to Nicholas.

the Admiralty Commissioners were not 'as sensible as they are knowing'.¹⁵⁶

Nevertheless, there were occasions when the Victualler was at fault. The service provided by Sir Sampson Darrell and his staff in particular left a lot to be desired. In August 1630 Mervyn complained that his ship could not leave the Downs until the arrival of some beer, and although he had been told that this had been shipped it had not materialised, 'though ye windes have beene faire'.¹⁵⁷ Shortly after Mervyn was also obliged to await the arrival of a fresh supply of victuals, and this too proved slow to appear. He caustically remarked that 'wee have made a faire voyage for the king's profitt and advantage of the service, having stayed heere full 15 dayes to take in 14 dayes victualls', and he added that 'for this last 3 monthes victualls I dare affirme wee have spent the one halfe to take in the other'.¹⁵⁸ Four years later it was Pennington's turn to bemoan the slowness of Darrell and his deputies. Although the Admiralty instructed Darrell on 5 June to provide Pennington's ships with four weeks' worth of victuals by the end of the month, Pennington did not receive anything until 25 July. 'It is a misserable thing', he wrote, 'yt wee are not able to victell 4 pore ships for 3 moneths undelr 6 or 7 weeches time'. The Dutch, he asserted, could furnish a fleet of forty-eight ships in just eleven days, and 'soe mighte wee if wee tooke ye Right coorse'.¹⁵⁹

Darrell's death in May 1635 did not see an immediate end to such complaints. In November Pennington opined that the Principal Officers, who had been put in temporary charge of provisioning the fleet, 'hath neither shewne care nor judg[me]nt in this poore bussines of victuallinge'.

156 P.R.O., SP16/246/85, 27 Sept. 1633, Nicholas to Pennington.

157 P.R.O., SP16/172/7, 2 Aug. 1630, Mervyn to Nicholas.

158 P.R.O., SP16/173/3, 3 Sept. 1630, Mervyn to Admiralty.

159 P.R.O., SP16/272/57,58, 25 July 1634, Pennington to Admiralty & Nicholas respectively. See also SP16/271/78.

Pennington claimed that he could have victualled the eight ships under his command from London in a week, whereas the Officers had spent seven or eight weeks doing so and had still not finished.¹⁶⁰ Such sentiments were understandable, but they were not entirely justified. The Navy Board was busy enough attending to its own affairs, and the extra burden of victualling may have simply proved too much. Edisbury was not normally given to grumbling, but on being rebuked by the Admiralty for the slow delivery of victuals, he complained that 'the vittling hath ben no small troble to us, wherof I had more then my share'.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, it had clearly been a mistake to entrust the victualling of the Navy to the Principal Officers. This was recognised by the Admiralty in September 1635, when it recommended to the King the immediate appointment of a new Victualler.¹⁶²

Once victuals had been delivered to the ships, it was important that they were safely stowed. However, one reason why there were so many complaints about bad victuals in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was that members of the crew were not always careful in carrying out this task.¹⁶³ In 1630 the captain of the *Second Whelp* alleged that the officers of his ship had forgotten to bung up their beer barrels when these were stowed, so that the crew was forced to drink beer which was 'musty and dead'.¹⁶⁴ When,

160 P.R.O., SP16/301/23, 5 Nov. 1635, Pennington to Nicholas.

161 P.R.O., SP16/296/47, 28 Aug. 1635, Edisbury to Nicholas. The slow delivery was probably caused by bad weather: SP16/297/7, 3 Sept. 1635, Edisbury to Coke.

162 P.R.O., SP16/298/57, 28 Sept. 1635, Nicholas' notes. It is not clear who suggested that the Principal Officers should assume responsibility for victualling, but it may have been the King. On 1 June 1635 the Admiralty Commissioners resolved to ask Charles whether the Officers should continue victualling the ships; two days later Charles said that they should: SP16/475 fo.388v; SP16/290/13.

163 For the 18th century, the Victualling Board's instructions to the Admiralty Secretary in 1715 are suggestive: *Naval Administration, 1715-1750*, ed. Daniel A. Baugh, N.R.S., cxx (1977), p.411.

164 P.R.O., SP16/167/16, received 3 May 1630, Powell to Nicholas. The

in 1637, Crane was challenged about the quality of the victuals he had provided the previous year, he replied that 'many complaints are uniuſtly raiſed againſt him' because victuals were careleſſly ſtowed. There were occasions, however, when no-one was really reſponſible for miſhandling provisions. It was probably because the victuals of the *Assurance* had to be unloaded and then reloaded after the diſcovery of a leak that her fiſh proved corrupt in 1636.¹⁶⁵ In 1637 Crane was reimbursed the coſt of ſeven tons of beer which were loſt aboard the *Mary Roſe*, 'w^hilch by reaſon of the often removeinge of it from ſhipp to ſhippe diuerſe of the Butts' hoopes ſtarted of and ſo the ſaid Beere quite leaked out'.¹⁶⁶

It was not enough merely to obtain victuals and then to deliver them. If quality was to be ensured, victuals had to be inſpected and defective ſupplies replaced. It is to this important matter that we muſt now turn.

VII. Surveys and Complaints

Michael Oppenheim claimed that the Caroline Navy lacked even a nominal ſystem of ſurvey to ensure baſic ſtandards in victualling.¹⁶⁷ However, this is demonſtrably untrue. Although there were weakneſſes in the inſpection proceſſ, early ſeventeenth century naval administrators clearly appreciated that a victualling ſervice which lacked ſuch a ſystem was open to abuſe.

Oppenheim failed to notice that ſhipboard officers were required to ſurvey victuals on their receipt. Speaking in Star Chamber in May 1637, the

ſhip's purſer, however, aſſerted that Powell's complaints were falſe: SP16/165/41, 30 April 1630, William Gildon to Alcock.

165 P.R.O., SP16/349/67, 9 March 1637, Crane to [Admiralty].

166 P.R.O., E351/2439, n.f.

167 Oppenheim, *Administration of the Royal Navy*, p.222. Oppenheim has recently been echoed by L.C. Martin in 'John Crane (1576-1660) of Loughton Bucks., Surveyor General of all Victuals for Ships, 1635-42', *Mariner's Mirror*, lxx (1984), p.144.

purser William Lewes affirmed that 'the custom is for the pursers to re-seale the victuall uppon the viewe & allowance of the quartermasters'.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, one set of naval regulations decreed that the master, the boatswain, the quartermasters and the steward of each ship were to weigh their victuals 'and freele refuse that which is faulty'.¹⁶⁹ There is every reason to suppose that this right was exercised in practice. Three hundred and seventy five biscuits out of a consignment of 1,500 were returned to John Clifton in 1626 as 'not beeinge sufficientt to be spentt' by the officers of the *Convertive* in 1626.¹⁷⁰ In January 1630 the purser of the *Ninth Whelp* wanted the Victualler to replace 349 four-pound pieces of rotten meat after a survey conducted by the ship's officers.¹⁷¹ Five months later the master's mates and the quartermasters of the *Mary Rose* returned a hogshead full of beef to the hoymaster who delivered it to the ship on the grounds that it stank.¹⁷² The boatswain of the *Constant Reformation* refused to take in his ship's victuals in April 1635 because none of his fellow officers were present to survey them, as did members of the crew of the *Red Lion* the same month for the same reason.¹⁷³

If victuals went unsurveyed by a ship's officers, it was due to their indolence and not to lack of instructions. In 1637 the Navy Board, alarmed at recent laxity among ship officers in taking surveys, admonished 'the Masters, Pursers and quarter Masters of all the ships to take speciall care, as well for the good of his Majesties service as ye prevention of corrupt, unwholsom victualls to [sic] endanger their own and their

168 Bodl. Libr., C827 fo.73. The deputy Victualler Henry Austen agreed.

169 P.R.O., SP16/119 fo.120v, n.d.

170 P.R.O., SP16/27/88, account of William Reade, purser.

171 P.R.O., SP16/159/39, 29 Jan. 1630, Thomas Morgan to Nicholas.

172 P.R.O., SP16/169/25, 21 June 1630, certificate of William Jewell.

173 P.R.O., SP16/287/49, 25 April 1635, Nathan Boulton to Darrell.

Companies healths'.¹⁷⁴

Any complaint arising from a survey by ship officers necessarily required further investigation, not least because complaints were not always genuine. In June 1628 Coke reported that a consignment of beer which had been sent to the *Garland* and refused as stinking had been examined and found to be perfectly adequate. Coke attributed the grumbling to a general reluctance among the mariners of the fleet to undertake a second attempt to relieve La Rochelle because the enterprise was commonly rumoured to be hopeless.¹⁷⁵ The following year, Edward Nicholas expected punishment to be meted out to those officers aboard the *Red Lion* who, through a false complaint about their victuals, had caused the sailing of their ship to be delayed three weeks.¹⁷⁶

The complaints of a ship's company were usually communicated at the outset to the Victualler or his assistants rather than to the Admiralty. Only a complainant's failure to secure redress from the Victualler might necessitate the Admiralty's involvement. Writing to Nicholas in 1631, Capt. Thomas Kettleby related how he had informed Darrell that his company's meat had been cut irregularly. Kettleby's displeasure at the slowness of Darrell's response contrasts with his reluctance to write to the Admiralty Commissioners, 'whom I am loath to trouble with complaints at my hand'. For his part, Darrell was less unwilling to approach the Admiralty.¹⁷⁷ Darrell's response to the complaints of the junior officers of the *Mary Rose* in 1630 about the quality of their beef was to register his own complaint with the Admiralty. He evidently agreed with the hoymaster

174 P.R.O., SP16/363/39, 6 July 1637, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

175 P.R.O., SP16/108/18, 25 June 1628, Coke to Buckingham.

176 P.R.O., SP16/148/83, 19 Aug. 1629, Nicholas to Dorchester.

177 P.R.O., SP16/195/1, 24 June 1631, Kettleby to Nicholas.

responsible for the delivery, who sampled it and declared that 'I [did] never eate better pickled beefe'.¹⁷⁸

The Admiralty seems to have understood that, in investigating complaints about victuals, it had to be seen to have acted impartially. A panel packed with the Victualler's cronies which overrode the objections of a ship's quartermasters was likely to lack credibility. This did not mean that the Victualler's staff were automatically excluded from all surveys. However, their presence was counter-balanced by other officials who had no financial interest which would lead them to an impartial verdict. When the *Garland's* beer was examined in June 1628, for instance, the presence of the deputy Victualler and his brewer was off-set by the attendance of Sir John Coke, the financier Julian Calandrini and the deputy Vice-Admiral of Hampshire, William Towerson. Nevertheless, these officers were still government officials, and in the interests of complete impartiality it was sometimes advisable to obtain the opinion of total outsiders. This was appreciated by Coke, as his response to another complaint that same month illustrates. On hearing that the fish provided by Holt were too small, Coke despatched Calandrini to investigate, who substantiated the allegation. The matter did not rest there, however, for Coke then sent for Holt and all three men decided that the fish should be further surveyed by 'neutrals'.¹⁷⁹ One common source of neutral surveyors was Deptford's Trinity House. When in December 1630 the officers of the *Garland* rejected part of their beef, Coke ordered three members of the Corporation to investigate.¹⁸⁰

178 P.R.O., SP16/170/6, 1 July 1630, Sydenham to Nicholas. For the hoy-master, see above, n.172.

179 P.R.O., SP16/106 fo.77.

180 P.R.O., SP16/176/40, 7 Dec. 1630, certificate by Garland's officers; Brit. Lib., Add. MS., uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C148/41), n.d., note crossed through by Coke. The complaint proved to be groundless: SP16/177/21, 18 Dec. 1630, Salmon, Tutchin & Moyer to Coke.

It was not always practicable to organise a survey of those victuals which had been rejected by a ship's officers as defective, as Pennington effectively discovered, to his cost, in October 1633. Writing to Nicholas he complained that, having been resupplied in the Downs, it was found that 'ye most part of our beefe and porke is tainted & our Bere drie and nought'. Indeed, the entire supply constituted 'ye worst victualls yt ever I had from any victualler'. Nevertheless, he had chosen not to complain to the Admiralty. Instead, he had forced his crew to accept the victuals which they had been given. At first sight, this seems callous and inhumane. However, Pennington's crew had waited longer for their victuals than had been anticipated due largely to bad weather. Rejection of their victuals would have left them without any supplies at all, the ship would have been left idle while a survey was arranged and a fresh consignment was put together, and there was no guarantee that the weather would permit hoys to come alongside to deliver the new provisions even if they could get to the ship.¹⁸¹ In short, the extremity of the situation forced Pennington to accept whatever victuals he received, regardless of their condition.

Pennington's position in 1633 is noteworthy because it exposed a flaw in the organisation of the victualling service. Although Oppenheim was wrong to assert that victuals were not regularly surveyed, shipboard inspection alone was insufficient: it was also necessary to prevent complaints arising in the first place. This could best be done by inspecting the victuals in the storehouses prior to their despatch to the ships. Yet between 1625 and 1640 there were only three occasions when this is known to have been done by someone other than the Victualler.

The problem arose because the Victualler was also technically the

181 P.R.O., SP16/247/76, 14 Oct. 1633.

Surveyor of Marine Victuals. This was obviously unsatisfactory, and it prompted one contemporary to remark that it was 'all one for one man to bee Theefe and Judge'.¹⁸² Similar anxieties about the Victualler's dual function were expressed more tactfully by the Council of War in 1626 when it observed that victualling and surveying were two distinct offices.¹⁸³ For his part, Secretary Coke took such sentiments to their logical conclusion when he advocated the appointment of a separate Surveyor.¹⁸⁴ However, this sound advice went unheeded, although John Crane at least would probably not have been averse to its implementation. After the complaints which had been brought against him during the Northumberland enquiry, Crane asked the Admiralty to appoint someone to inspect his provisions before they were sent to the ships, 'to thend that if any fault shalbe found with the victualles afterwards, the blame may be laide & imputed to ye neglect of those that are appoynted to take the care and chardge of the victualls'.¹⁸⁵ The Admiralty duly complied with this request, despatching four surveyors to Tower Hill, none of whom was employed by the Navy.¹⁸⁶ However, it failed to take the obvious next step, which was to translate an occasional procedure into an institutional form.

Although it was important that the Navy should have had a proper system of food inspection, there were undoubtedly limits to what even the most conscientious surveyors could achieve. In 1634 the seaman Nathaniel Knott alleged that certain brewers had mastered 'the arte to sophisticate beere,

182 Longleat, Coventry Papers, MS. vol. 117 (anon. tract) fo.17.

183 Berkshire Record Office, Trumbull Add. MS. 48, n.f. (The Trumbull MSS. have recently been bought by the British Library).

184 See above, n.47.

185 See above, n.165.

186 P.R.O., SP16/363/39.1, 24 May 1637, Anthony Tutchin, John Hayman, Andrew Fursland & John Russell to Principal Officers. Tutchin was a member of Trinity House & a former Master Attendant in the Navy. Fursland was a London brewer. I have been unable to identify Hayman & Russell.

wlilth broome instead of mault, and (to make it looke the more lovelie) to pickle it with salt water, soe that whilst it is newe it shall seemingly bee worthie of praise; but in one moneth wax worse then stinkinge water'.¹⁸⁷ In the face of such deceit, perhaps all the Navy could hope to do was to minimise the receipt of defective victuals. However, even this may have been too ambitious. In 1625 a special team of victualling surveyors was established to inspect the victuals provided for Cecil's fleet.¹⁸⁸ Yet the Cadiz expedition has become notorious for the corruption of the fleet's victuals. Did this mean that the surveyors failed to do their job properly, or were there other factors at work here?

The nine victualling surveyors, all members of Deptford's Trinity House, submitted their findings to Sir John Coke towards the end of May 1625.¹⁸⁹ In addition, five of them wrote to the Navy Commissioners on 1 June concerning the slaughter of beef.¹⁹⁰ These two documents reveal that the surveyors were not afraid to draw attention to defects in the provisions. They were particularly critical of the cask which had been provided, much of which was unseasoned, and of the shoddy way in which it had been assembled into barrels. Some of the beer provided by two brewers was discovered to be 'unsufficient' because it 'wanteth hops'. Two hundred firkins of butter and twenty barrels of pease were also said to be unfit for consumption. The meat packed at Tower Hill the surveyors found to be good, '& doubt not the Continuance therof yf that wihlch is pickled Caske

187 P.R.O., SP16/279/106, 'Advice of a Seaman'.

188 For their instructions, which were issued sometime before 31 March, see Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., C159/6).

189 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., App. 14/13, n.f.), notebook on victualling, 21-26 May 1625.

190 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., C174/16). See also H.M.C., *11th Rept.*, app. i. 20, 3/13 June 1625, Salvetti to Grand Duke of Tuscany.

maye be kept full wth pickle'. However, some of the cattle recently slaughtered was found to be 'verrye poore and scarce'.

These criticisms provoked a firm reaction. The brewers who had provided weak beer, and those who possessed faulty casks, were required to attend Sir John Wolstenholme. In addition, Coke ordered that the defective butter and pease were 'not to bee imployed in the service nor paid for'. As for the Navy Commissioners, they recommended that all the poor quality meat should be consumed in harbour rather than included in the sea rations. Finally, part of the provisions provided at Plymouth were also found to be defective, and these were sent back to a protesting Sir James Bagg.¹⁹¹

Although the victualling surveyors evidently did a good job, there were nevertheless further complaints. The captain of the *Red Lion*, Sir Francis Stewart, spoke of 'rotten bread & stinking beere in divers shippes to a great quantity' in mid August.¹⁹² This report was treated sceptically by Coke. It was inevitable that some of the provisions would prove to be defective given the scale of the expedition, he remarked, for 'no man in his own house can bee so provident that no parcel of ill bread or ill beere may be found'. This was a valid observation, of course, but Coke appreciated the peril of ignoring any complaint. On his advice Buckingham ordered Sir Edward Cecil to survey the fleet's provisions with a number of seamen in the presence of the mayor of Plymouth and Sir James Bagg.¹⁹³ Dr. McGowan has concluded that this survey was never conducted, which is damning if it is true.¹⁹⁴ However, there is an unsigned and undated survey among the State Papers which chimes in with Stewart's complaints as it

191 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64884 fo.7, 14 June 1625, Pye to Coke.

192 *Ibid.*, fo.66, 16 Aug. 1625, Stewart to Coke.

193 P.R.O., SP16/5/77, 25 Aug. 1625, Coke to Buckingham; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.44v, 30 Aug. 1625, Buckingham to Cecil.

194 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under Buckingham', p.245.

reveals a substantial quantity of defective bread and beer.¹⁹⁵ There is no clear evidence that the faulty provisions were replaced, but two pieces of evidence point to that conclusion. First, on 30 August Apsley was authorised to receive £3,000 from the Exchequer for this purpose.¹⁹⁶ Secondly, on 6 September Cecil reported from Plymouth that it would be three weeks before the fleet's beer was ready.¹⁹⁷ This was presumably fresh beer to replace that which had been found to be defective, for a month earlier Bagg had said that all the fleet's victuals were provided.¹⁹⁸

The surveys conducted in 1625 point to an administration which did its best to eliminate serious shortcomings in the fleet's victuals prior to sailing. Yet the fact remains that during the expedition the fleet's victuals proved demonstrably bad. One reason for this has already been suggested. This is that, by replacing those victuals which the surveyors had found to be defective during the heat of the summer, the Navy may have unwillingly perpetuated the problem it sought to cure. However, there may be another, even more fundamental cause of what went wrong.

The Cadiz expedition sailed from England much later than was originally anticipated. Shortage of funds meant that what was to have been a summer expedition left for Spain on 8 October. Yet restraints on the availability of cash appear not to have prevented Apsley from supplying the majority of the fleet's needs by 23 April, as he informed the Privy Council.¹⁹⁹ By that date all the fleet's bread, butter and pease was ready and could be loaded in two weeks, as was eighty per cent of the beef. Apsley calculated that

195 P.R.O., SP16/6/138.

196 P.R.O., SP16/5/57, 20 Aug. 1625, Apsley to Buckingham; *A.P.C. 1625-6*, p.140; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.45, 30 Aug. 1625, Buckingham to Apsley; *C.S.P.D. 1625-6*, p.547, docquet, 30 Aug. 1625.

197 P.R.O., SP16/6/25, Cecil to Buckingham.

198 P.R.O., SP16/5/6, 2 Aug. 1625, Bagg to Nicholas.

199 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.36v, 29 April 1625, notes by Coke.

the remaining twenty per cent would be ready by the end of the month. He claimed that all the fleet's beer was brewed, except 1,000 tuns, which he assured the Privy Council would be provided by the beginning of May. This was apparently an overstatement, for as late as 25 May the fleet still required 2,877 tuns of beer. Nevertheless, nearly two thirds of the fleet's beer (6,064 tuns) had been brewed by that date.²⁰⁰ Large quantities of fish and cheese had still to be provided in late April, but Apsley thought that these provisions would be ready by 10 May.

The contrast between the rapidity with which Apsley was able to cater for the greater part of the fleet's needs and the late sailing of the ships may hold the key to an understanding of what went wrong. In the eighteenth century it was thought that beef and pork could be kept in store for up to two years if the casks were not damaged.²⁰¹ However, in 1636 Sir Henry Mainwaring cast doubt on whether the only methods available to preserve meat - salting and pickling - were efficacious beyond four months.²⁰² In view of this, it is surely disturbing that Cecil's fleet left England in October with a large proportion of meat which was at least five-and-a-half months old. When the fleet started for home in mid-November its remaining victuals were seven months old. Yet the age of the fleet's victuals is frequently overlooked. The complaint of the captain of the *St. George* - that his company's meat stank so much that 'no dog of parrish [*sic*] Garden I thinke will eate it' - is often quoted, but less well noticed is the fact that his letter was not penned until 11 December.²⁰³ Similarly, while Sir

200 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., App. 14/13, n.f.); Add. MS. 64883 fo.96r-v, 26 May 1625, Navy Commissioners to victualling surveyors.

201 Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p.85.

202 P.R.O., SP16/338/39, n.d., extracts of depositions obtained in Northumberland's enquiry.

203 P.R.O., SP16/11/49. Paris Garden was used for bear-baiting.

George Blundell remarked that the cider in the *Bonaventure* stank 'worse than carr[il]on' it is important to realise that he did not write his letter until 3 November.²⁰⁴ It would seem that the fleet's victuals lasted just as long as they were intended to. Thereafter they served to poison and kill.

This interpretation is necessarily speculative. However, it provides a more plausible explanation of the ill condition of the fleet's victuals than has hitherto been offered. It is usually assumed that Apsley and Bagg were the villains of the piece, but both men were conscientious royal servants, and it makes little sense to explain the disastrous mortality which occurred in 1625 in terms of corruption. It seems all too likely that the deficiencies of that year lay not in the quality of the victuals as they were provided, but in a failure to synchronise the rest of the Navy's preparations with those of the Victualler. Thus, a Privy Seal authorising the Ordnance Office to receive the funds it needed for the fleet's munitions was only issued six days after Apsley reported to the Privy Council that most of his provisions were ready.²⁰⁵ The reason for the adoption of this extraordinary timetable was that the government was so short of money that it simply could not afford to do things any other way.

The Cadiz expedition exposed the fact that, no matter how well the Victualler ran his department, everything ultimately depended upon an adequate supply of funds. Yet the Victualler was constantly starved of sufficient financial resources. Only the Ordnance Office was less well financed, and it is to this department's relationship with the Navy that we must now turn our attention.

204 P.R.O., SP16/9/15. Cider was provided instead of part of the beer ration for ships serving in southern waters.

205 Moreover, nothing was issued from the Exchequer on this Privy Seal until 3 May: P.R.O., E403/1736, n.f.

Chapter 7

THE ORDNANCE OFFICE AND THE NAVY

The Navy was not responsible for gunning and munitioning its ships. This task fell instead to the Ordnance Office, which also serviced the kingdom's forts and the armies raised during the 1620s and 1630s. The Ordnance Office's ability to discharge its naval duties, and the problems which it faced, form the subject matter of this chapter.

By comparison with the Navy, the Ordnance Office was relatively small. At its head stood the Master, whose functions were largely nominal. Subordinate to him were five Principal Officers, namely the Lieutenant, the Surveyor, the Clerk of the Ordnance, the Clerk of the Deliveries and a Keeper of the Stores. The most senior Officer was the Lieutenant, who acted as the department's treasurer and accountant. He was followed in line of importance by the Surveyor. However, in 1627 the Clerk of the Ordnance, Francis Morice, briefly rose to a position of seniority as both the Lieutenant, Sir William Heydon, and the Surveyor, Sir Alexander Brett, decided to serve in the army which was sent to Ré. Shortly before he left England in June, Heydon appointed Morice as his deputy in his absence.¹ Heydon was drowned shortly thereafter, but rather than risk the disruption which the appointment of his successor might cause, the Privy Council decided to leave Morice temporarily in charge as deputy Lieutenant.²

In addition to the Principal Officers, there were also a number of junior officials. Two Proofmasters were responsible for examining and testing guns

1 P.R.O., E406/45 fo.206v, 31 May 1627. The deputation was sealed & delivered in the presence of Paul Harris, who held a reversion to the Surveyorship, & the Clerk of the Deliveries, Edward Johnson.

2 A.P.C. 1627, pp.462-3, 31 July 1627, Privy Council to Totnes; P.R.O., SP16/74/38, 18 Aug. 1627.

and powder. One of them, John Reynolds, was also Master Gunner of England until his death in 1638, which was another Ordnance Office post. The Office also employed its own Purveyor, and dealt with about a dozen artificers on a regular basis, the most important of whom were two gunfounders, a gunpowder manufacturer, a cordage supplier, an ironsmith, a wheelwright and a carpenter. Lastly, the Office relied on the muscle of twenty permanent labourers to shift its stores.

Ordnance Office meetings were theoretically held twice weekly in the Tower of London, which acted as the department's arsenal and where the Office had access to a wharf and two cranes. Outside London there was a storehouse at Portsmouth, which was tended by its own storekeeper. It was established during the war years of the 1620s and was retained in the 1630s due to the development of the naval yard.³ The hire of a storehouse and cellar at Plymouth in 1627 and 1628 proved to be a purely temporary measure.⁴ The Office lacked storage facilities at the naval yards at Chatham and Deptford, so that in 1636 two gunners were obliged to hire storehouses to lay up the guns and munitions of their ships.⁵

Large chunks of the Ordnance Office's records have not survived, including most of what must at one time have been a voluminous correspondence. Many of the books kept by the Clerk of the Deliveries, comprising warrant books ordering stores to be delivered to the Navy's ships and the records of delivery themselves, have also disappeared. On the other hand, the Office's financial records have remained largely intact, with the

3 P.R.O., W054/12, n.f., 31 March 1629, debenture made out to John Bigges, storekeeper. On the decision to retain the Portsmouth storehouse, see Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.94v.

4 P.R.O., W054/14, n.f., 28 June 1634, debentures made out to Wm Bennet & Richard Laurence.

5 P.R.O., E351/2660, n.f., payments to Thomas Taylor & Robert Story.

exception of the books of bills made out to contractors, of which just two exist for the period 1625-40.⁶ The loss of the bill books is less important than it might seem. Each bill specified the type, quantity and quality of a particular store on its delivery to the Storekeeper, and was essentially a certificate of inspection. However, when the merchant took his bills to the Clerk of the Ordnance, they were superseded by bills of debt, called debentures, which specified the amount the contractor was owed.⁷ These debenture books have survived complete.⁸ In addition to the large quantity of financial records, there is one spectacular archival survival, which hitherto has been completely overlooked by administrative historians. This is the Office's detailed notebook of daily business, which was kept between 1626 and 1637. It is 190 folios in length, and forms part of the British Library's Harleian manuscripts.⁹

Except for the Office notebook, which was kept for internal purposes, the reliability of much of the surviving archive is open to dispute. Office records contain more than their fair share of clerical errors. Many of these were clearly nothing more than slips of the pen, such as the incorrect date given to a Privy Seal in the debenture book for 1627, which is shown as the 26th rather than 24 March.¹⁰ Mistakes of this kind are also to be found in the Navy's records. Indeed, it would be surprising if they were not. However, there are other sorts of errors in the Office records which suggest more than mere carelessness. In the 1630s the then Lieutenant of the Ordnance, Sir John Heydon, claimed that many debentures bore no

6 P.R.O., WO51/1 (1630-4); N.M.M., CAD/C/4 (1635-7).

7 P.R.O., SP16/179/51.I, (Ordnance Officers' statement on Office procedures, 1632), item 5.

8 P.R.O., WO49/55-77 (1625-42).

9 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429. It is written in a number of hands.

10 P.R.O., WO49/58 fo.76v; c.f. P.R.O., E403/2605, p.304.

relation to the day of delivery, 'but do commonly beare date before the provisions were delivered or could possibly bee made'.¹¹ This would explain why the Clerk of the Deliveries, Edward Johnson, received the cost of travelling expenses he incurred between 25 August and 30 October 1625 on a debenture dated 23 July.¹² However, there was nothing necessarily sinister in this method of dating debentures. In Johnson's case, the date may simply suggest that he was paid in advance rather than in arrears, as was normal.

Yet it would be a mistake to brush aside all the errors in the Ordnance Office's records. By comparing the Office notebook in the British Library with the only book to record in detail the delivery of guns and munitions to the Navy's ships, some disturbing discrepancies are revealed. In three cases in 1627 the delivery book suggests that naval gunners received their stores before the Office had actually arranged to have them transported to their ships. For example, the delivery book states that the gunner of the *St. James* received his stores on 4 May. This was quite impossible, because the notebook shows that it was not until 25 May that the Officers drew up a contract with three wainmen to carry the stores to Bristol, where the ship lay.¹³ Unfortunately, there seems to be no way of knowing whether this was an honest mistake, or whether the delivery record was deliberately falsified. Whatever the truth of the matter, it seems unlikely that most of the rest of the information contained in the delivery book is incorrect, for many of its entries actually reveal that the Office was sometimes slow to deliver its stores, as we shall see. Nevertheless, it is important to realise that the rest of this chapter's findings are necessarily partly

11 P.R.O., SP16/179/59, n.d.

12 P.R.O., WO49/55 p.161.

13 P.R.O., WO55/1643 fo.110; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.17v. The other 2 ships were the *St. George* & the *Convertive*, both of which were munitioned in Aug./Sept. 1627. For the *St. George*, see below, p.315. The delivery book (WO55/1643) covers the period 1625-30.

dependent upon a source whose reliability cannot be taken for granted.

The Ordnance Office has attracted universal condemnation for its alleged inefficiency. Oppenheim observed that the Office 'retained that evil pre-eminence in sloth and incapacity it had already earned',¹⁴ while Professor Aylmer has commented that 'supplies and weapons were usually late in arriving'.¹⁵ There is a degree of truth in both of these assessments. However, neither Oppenheim nor Aylmer rested their findings on an exhaustive survey of the evidence. Despite the shortcomings of the archive, both in terms of its quantity and its possible inaccuracy, there is considerable scope for a more searching enquiry into the activities of the Office and the problems which it faced. A good place to start a fresh investigation of the sources is the preparations for the Ré expedition of 1627, for they are uniquely well-documented.

According to Professor Aylmer, the Ré expedition, like the Cadiz expedition of 1625, 'revealed serious faults in the Ordnance'. Yet, if it is reliable, the evidence relating to the spring of 1627 points to a rather different conclusion. On 7 April 1627 Buckingham ordered the Master of the Ordnance, the Earl of Totnes, to furnish the royal warships *Warspite* and *Victory* with guns and munitions for the forthcoming expedition.¹⁶ Totnes subsequently despatched a letter to the Officers, which arrived two days later.¹⁷ On the same day, the 9th, the Officers delivered the stores to the two ships as they had been instructed.¹⁸ This was impressive by any standards, but it would be misleading to suggest that it was typical. Nevertheless, the Office gunned and munitioned many of the ships which were

14 Oppenheim, *Administration of the Royal Navy*, p.289.

15 Aylmer, 'Attempts at Administrative Reform', p.242.

16 P.R.O., W055/454 fo.56v.

17 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.11v.

18 P.R.O., W055/1643 fo.103v.

destined for France surprisingly quickly that spring. The *Nonsuch* and *Esperance* were supplied in exactly a week after Buckingham issued his warrant, while the armed merchantmen *Mary*, *Recovery* and *Return* received their gunners' stores in eight days.¹⁹ Not all the warships were supplied as fast as this, however. It took the Ordnance Office sixteen days to furnish the stores of the *Triumph* and *Rainbow*, and no less than twenty-five to supply the *Due Repulse* and *Vanguard*.²⁰ Yet none of these four ships were really supplied behind time. Buckingham ordered Totnes to furnish all four on 10 March, which was rather early, for the Ordnance Office was not issued with a Privy Seal to pay for the fleet and army until 24 March.²¹ Once the Office had received this official assurance of funding, the records show that it acted fairly promptly, supplying the *Repulse* and *Vanguard* within two days and the *Triumph* and *Rainbow* within twelve. The only warships of the Ré fleet which were furnished with their stores in May rather than in late March or April were the vessels commanded by Capt. John Pennington. This was not the Ordnance Office's fault, for these ships were only added to the fleet list in May. Nevertheless, the Office seems to have responded reasonably quickly to this fresh demand on its energy and resources. For instance, Buckingham ordered Totnes to supply Pennington's flagship, the *Red Lion*, on 19 May.²² This order reached the Ordnance Officers on the 21st, and the ship was supplied ten days later.²³

Buckingham was nevertheless dissatisfied with the Ordnance Office's performance in the spring of 1627. 'I pierlceive by the mocon of that

19 *Nonsuch & Esperance*: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.65; P.R.O., WO55/1643 fo.99. *Mary, Recovery & Return*: WO55/1643 fo.104v.

20 *Triumph & Rainbow*: P.R.O., WO55/454 fo.41v; WO55/1643 fo.100. *Repulse & Vanguard*: P.R.O., WO55/454 fos.41v-2; WO55/1643 fo.100.

21 P.R.O., E403/2605 p.301 (Privy Seal).

22 P.R.O., WO55/454 fo.58v.

23 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.16v; P.R.O., WO55/1643 fo.114v.

greate worke', he wrote to Totnes on 28 April, 'that there is not yt quicknes and readynes used by the office of the stores and lyveries as is answerable to the hast required'.²⁴ There was, perhaps, an element of truth in this. On receiving letters from both the King and the Duke ten days earlier to speed things along, the Officers had sent their messenger 'to warne diverse Smiths into the office, who have neglected his Ma[ajes]t[ie]'s service, w[hilch] they undertooke'. They had also resolved that 'ev[er]ly man in his place is to attend, and to work early and late'.²⁵ Nevertheless, both Charles and Buckingham were probably mistaken in believing that the Office was not concerned to get things done quickly. The efforts of the minor official Henry Johnson provide a striking example of the sense of urgency under which the department's employees laboured. On 27 March the Privy Council ordered Totnes to send Johnson, who had served as the fleet's Clerk of the Ordnance in 1625, to Hampshire to survey the arms belonging to the regiments which had served at Cadiz so that it could be ascertained how many would need to be repaired for the forthcoming service.²⁶ Johnson was duly despatched to Southampton on the 29th, and spent the next three weeks frantically riding round the county 'night and day', inspecting the firearms of various scattered infantry companies. He so overdid things that he rode his horse to death, and had to buy a new one.²⁷

The real problem which faced the Ordnance Office in equipping the Ré fleet, as Johnson's activities show, was undoubtedly the sheer amount of work which had to be cleared rather than a lack of energy. Not only were the Officers instructed to furnish the fleet with guns and munitions, but

24 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817 fo.75.

25 For Buckingham's letter of 18 April, see *ibid.*, fo.62. For the King's letter, & the Officers' reactions, see Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.13.

26 *A.P.C. 1627*, p.163; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.9v.

27 P.R.O., W049/58 fo.82.

they were also expected to equip an army of 6,000 men. Moreover, Buckingham twice enlarged his original demands. In addition to the Privy Seal which had been issued in March to pay for the army, two more were drawn up in April and May which ordered an increase in the quantity of arms and supplies.²⁸

The enormous demands placed on the Office's time and energy by the Ré fleet necessarily meant that less important work was shunted to one side. One of the casualties of the preparations for the assault on Ré was the squadron of three ships which Buckingham ordered to be sent to the Elbe on 27 February.²⁹ The Duke's letter landed on the Officers' desk at Tower Hill on 2 March, where it lay until the 30th. On that date the Master Gunner of England, John Reynolds, was told to hasten the supply of guns and carriages to the ships, and to return a certificate to the Office.³⁰ However, four more days were to elapse before another official, who was ordered to go to Chatham to serve the ships with their guns, was told that this job was top of the list of the Office's priorities.³¹ Even then, it was not until 8 April that the ships were finally munitioned.³²

The Elbe squadron was not alone in suffering lengthy delays because of the Ré fleet. At the same time that Buckingham ordered the ships destined for the Elbe to be gunned and munitioned, he also instructed that the *Mary Rose* and the *St. Claude*, and two small pinnaces, the *Fly* and the *Spy*, should be employed on the east coast to waft the coal fleet. The pinnaces received their stores on 7 April, which was only marginally better than the Elbe ships.³³ The munitioning of the *Mary Rose*, however, turned into

28 P.R.O., E403/2605 pp.320,322, (Privy Seals of 18 April & 18 May).

29 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 37817 fos.22v-3.

30 Brit. Lib., Harl. MS. 429 fos.7,9v.

31 *Ibid.*, fo.10.

32 P.R.O., W055/1643 fo.101v.

33 P.R.O., W055/1643 fo.110v.

something of a saga. Buckingham effectively repeated his warrant of 27 February on 19 May when he ordered the ship to be munitioned for service at sea.³⁴ Yet the *Mary Rose* did not finally receive her gunner's stores until 14 June.³⁵ The fourth vessel of the batch, the *St. Claude*, appears to have been completely forgotten.

The failure of the Ordnance Office to provide a better service for the ships of the Elbe and North Sea squadrons in the spring of 1627 was understandable, and should be set against its energetic response to the demands placed on it by the Ré fleet. Nevertheless, it would be rash to suppose that the criticisms traditionally levelled at the Office under Charles I were entirely unfounded. There were occasions when the Office was not only late in supplying its stores, but was also apparently without good excuse. In the spring of 1631 it took a full month to munition the *Antelope*, despite the fact that the Office was not busy.³⁶ Two years later the Office treated the Navy to another piece of administrative ineptness. On 15 April 1633 the Admiralty ordered the Office to munition the *Henrietta Maria* and the *Charles* for service in the Channel.³⁷ However, as the Admiralty's warrant arrived while the Surveyor was absent, the other Officers agreed to wait until his return before supplying the ships with their guns.³⁸ It may have been this which lay at the bottom of the subsequent delay. On 13 May the Navy Board complained that, one reason why

34 P.R.O., W055/454 fo.57v.

35 P.R.O., W055/1643 fo.122. The Officers received another letter from the Duke dated 11 June to furnish the ship with 2 more guns: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37817. This will not explain the lengthy delay, however.

36 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fos.87v-8 (warrant dated 6 May, received 10 May, ammunition quota signed 17 May); Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64902 fo.109, 24 May 1631, Plumleigh to Coke; *ibid.*, fo.119, 5 June 1631, Plumleigh to Coke.

37 C.S.P.D. 1633-4, p.18.

38 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.109.

the ships could not sail was that their ammunition had not arrived.³⁹ It was not until 19 June that Admiral Pennington arrived in the Downs in the *Vanguard*, which had been appointed in stead of the *Charles*, and there was still no sign of the *Henrietta Maria*.⁴⁰

Yet the Ordnance Office's slowness in providing the Navy with its stores was often not the department's fault. One of the problems that it had to contend with was a shortage of staff. During the First Bishops' War the Office was expected to provide both the fleet with its munitions and the army with its artillery train simultaneously. The Office appears to have coped remarkably well, for seven out of a batch of twelve ships ordered to be prepared for sea by 10 April 1639 had been provided with their gunners' stores by 4 April.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Office was badly overstretched. Writing to Sir John Coke on 18 April, Sir John Heydon complained that there were 'so many ymployments as well for sea as land service at once...on foote, & so litle tyme & so few hands to affoord assistance'.⁴² The Master of the Ordnance, the Earl of Newport, evidently agreed with these sentiments, for the following year he ordered that two of the Officers and three of their clerks were to be paid for the extraordinary travelling costs they had incurred in 1639 in discharging their duties.⁴³

One of the factors which might delay the arrival of gunners' stores was unfavourable wind. Writing from Portsmouth in April 1636, Edisbury informed the Admiralty that, owing to a westerly wind, a bark freighted in London to

39 P.R.O., SP16/238/64.

40 P.R.O., SP16/241/15, 19 June 1633, Pennington to Admiralty. It is possible, but unlikely, that the Admiralty's decision to substitute the *Vanguard* for the *Charles*, a decision which was communicated to the Officers on 29 April, contributed to the delay.

41 P.R.O., SP16/409/44, 16 Jan. 1639, draft Privy Council order; P.R.O., SP16/417/28, 4 April 1639, Ordnance Office account of readiness of the fleet.

42 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64919 fo.46v.

43 P.R.O., WO55/455 p.78, 16 Aug. 1640, Newport to Heydon.

carry guns and carriages from the Tower for a number of ships 'cannot com hither'.⁴⁴ By the same token, winds which blew from the opposite direction prevented lighters carrying stores from sailing down the Thames to deliver their cargoes. On 1 April 1634 the captain of the *Bonaventure*, Richard Plumleigh, complained from the Downs that the Ordnance Office had failed to deliver to his ship ten lasts of powder which he was to convey to Ireland, and he remarked that 'I never knew the Office of the Ordinance quick in their dispatches'.⁴⁵ However, as the Navy Board pointed out in a letter to the Admiralty two days later, the vessels carrying victuals and munitions had been hindered from reaching the Navy's ships by contrary winds.⁴⁶

The Ordnance Office could only meet the Navy's needs if its officials were told what was required. Unfavourable wind was not the only factor which prevented Capt. Plumleigh from receiving on time the powder he was ordered to transport to Ireland in 1634. On 29 March the Ordnance Officers informed him that it had not been sent because they had not received an Admiralty warrant to issue it.⁴⁷ This was not simply an excuse, for the warrant finally received by the Officers bore the same date as the letter Plumleigh sent to Coke telling him that no warrant had as yet been received.⁴⁸

The Admiralty also appears to have been remarkably slipshod over the issue of warrants to the Ordnance Office in 1633. On 5 March Kenrick

44 P.R.O., SP16/318/53, 9 April 1636, Edisbury to Admiralty.

45 P.R.O., SP16/265/4.

46 P.R.O., SP16/265/10. The westerly winds which often penned ships in the Thames & Medway during April & May, were cited by the Navy Board as one reason to develop the yard at Portsmouth in 1637: P.R.O., SP16/321/66, 20 May 1636, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

47 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64908 fo.27. See also Plumleigh's letter to Coke of 25 March, in which he unfairly attributed blame to the 'slacknes of the Officers of the Ordinarie [*sic*]': *ibid.*, fo.25.

48 Brit. Lib., Harl. MS. 429 fo.121v. The warrant sent by the King was dated 29 March, and was received on the 31st.

Edisbury informed Sir William Russell from Chatham that the munitions of the *Tenth Whelp* had not materialised 'and as the Officers of thordenance Clerks tell me there is no warrant come to them for that whelp'.⁴⁹ As if this was not bad enough, the Office had also not received a warrant to munition the *Eighth Whelp* either, which was then preparing to put to sea at Portsmouth. Later that same day, however, a warrant to supply both Whelps arrived at the Tower, having been dated twelve days earlier.⁵⁰ The most likely explanation for this delay is that the warrant had simply sat on Edward Nicholas' desk all that time. Nevertheless, the Ordnance Office compounded this oversight by failing to deliver the stores more promptly when it finally received its orders. On 2 April the captain of the *Eighth Whelp* complained that his vessel had still not received her ammunition.⁵¹

The Ordnance Office inevitably attracted criticism for failing to deliver munitions on time, whether the fault lay with its officials or not. On 15 February 1637 Admiral Sir Henry Mervyn informed the Admiralty that the captain of the *Swan* frigate had been forced to spend £3 in hiring a boat to convey his gunner's stores to his ship because the Ordnance Office had not sent them down. 'The continuall delaies in that office', complained Mervyn, 'do much preiudice ye kings service'.⁵² Mervyn's irritation was understandable, but he was evidently unaware that the Ordnance Office had only been told to provide the *Swan* with essential stores as an afterthought. On 14 January Kenrick Edisbury had written that, so far as the Navy was concerned, the *Swan* would be ready to put to sea by the end of the following week, but he added that he had asked Sir William Russell to

49 P.R.O., SP16/233/30.

50 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.108. The warrant was dated 21 Feb., & is to be found at *C.S.P.D. 1631-3*, p.545.

51 P.R.O., SP16/236/6.

52 P.R.O., SP16/347/17, 15 Feb. 1637.

remind the Admiralty to provide a warrant for her munitions 'w[hilch] may be som cause to retard her yet awhile'.⁵³ In fact, the Admiralty did not actually issue a warrant to furnish the frigate until 22 January, which did not arrive at the Tower until the following day.⁵⁴ What at first sight appears to have been an example of Ordnance Office incompetence turns out, on closer inspection, to have been a piece of bungling by the Navy.

Four years earlier the Admiralty had sprung another warrant on the Ordnance Office at the last moment. On 22 March 1633 the Admiralty announced that the *Antelope* and *Ninth Whelp* were to be fitted for service on the Irish coast by 22 April.⁵⁵ However, they evidently did not feel the need to inform the Ordnance Office of this decision until 15 April, and since the warrant only arrived at the Tower on the 17th the Officers were left with just five days in which to supply these essential stores.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the Officers' own subsequent tardiness in furnishing the *Ninth Whelp* seems inexplicable. Even though her anxious captain sent his gunner to London to hurry them along, the Officers did not draw up the pinnace's proportions until 3 May, nor did they hire wains to carry the stores to Bristol until 10 May. Hence the Whelp's munitions did not arrive at Bristol until the 18th.⁵⁷ It was no wonder that the late sailing of the ships of the Irish Guard caused Lord Deputy Wentworth to complain.⁵⁸

The slow despatch of Admiralty warrants was not the only way in which the Navy sometimes hindered the Ordnance Office. In mid August 1627 the Privy

53 P.R.O., SP16/343/85, 14 Jan. 1637, Edisbury to Nicholas; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64924 fo.49, 14 Jan. 1637, Edisbury to Coke.

54 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fos.183v-4.

55 C.S.P.D. 1631-3, p.587.

56 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.109.

57 P.R.O., SP16/237/22, 22 April 1633, Capt. James to Nicholas; SP16/238/22, 3 May 1633, estimate; SP16/239/18, 21 May 1633, Capt. James to Nicholas; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.110v.

58 C.S.P.I. 1633-47, p.14, 6 July 1633, Wentworth to Admiralty.

Council ordered Totnes to provide munitions for Buckingham's army at Ré. This ammunition was to be loaded aboard ship by the 25th for transportation to Portsmouth, where it would be conveyed to Ré under a naval escort.⁵⁹ Although the Office proved unable to meet this deadline, this was scarcely surprising, for it had been given very little time. Nonetheless, the stores were apparently completely loaded aboard the transports by the 28th. These vessels should then have sailed immediately, for it was said that they had stayed 'only for their munition'. However, on 1 September they were still in the Thames. Fearing that they would be blamed for this further delay, the Officers summoned the master of one of the ships to explain what had happened, who told them 'that he was stayed by appointm[en]t of the [Navy] Commissioners for ye taking in of certen Boates whilch were to be delivered at Portesmouth'. Consequently, he had only finished loading the previous night.⁶⁰ This explanation casts fresh light on an incident for which the Ordnance Office has hitherto been held responsible.⁶¹

The Navy clearly failed to co-operate adequately with the Ordnance Office. This pointed to a structural weakness in the system of administration, which might have been solved if the Navy had been given the responsibility for gunning and munitioning its ships itself. Between 1546 and 1589 the Navy had actually looked to its own ordnance. A specially designated Master of naval Ordnance had been subservient to the Ordnance Office as well as being a member of the Navy Board, thereby allowing a close liaison between the two departments. In 1640 it was rumoured that the

59 A.P.C. 1627, pp.476,488-9. The Council's warrants were dated 9 & 15 August.

60 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.25; P.R.O., SP16/75/9, 25 Aug. 1627, Coke to Conway. The list of provisions sent to Ré in Aug. 1627 given in P.R.O., WO55/1684 fos.40v-41v says the stores were 'delivered' (meaning delivered to the transports in the Thames) on 29 August.

61 Lockyer, *Buckingham*, p.391.

government was contemplating a return to the old system because it frequently took the Ordnance Office too long to provide the Navy with the guns and stores it needed.⁶² This conclusion was a little harsh on the Ordnance Office, because it overlooked the manner in which the Office had sometimes been treated by the Navy, but the aim was nevertheless laudable.

There was always bound to be a delay in the execution of Admiralty warrants, even if they were despatched quickly and even if the officials at Tower Hill responded rapidly. The reason for this was that warrants issued by the Admiralty went to the Master of the Ordnance first, who then duplicated them under his own signature and sent both the original warrant and his own copy to Tower Hill. This multiplication of warrants often created a delay of at least one day. For example, the warrant which Buckingham sent from his house next to Whitehall ordering the alteration of the gun establishment of the *Red Lion* arrived at Tower Hill two days after it had been sent, having travelled via Totnes at his residence in the Savoy.⁶³ Only on a few occasions did Buckingham choose to communicate with the Officers directly himself. The most notable example was in June 1627, when both he and the Lieutenant of the Ordnance, Sir William Heydon, were at Portsmouth. Rather than write a letter to London seeking Totnes' permission to munition the *St. George*, which was purely notional anyway, the Duke simply issued his order to Heydon direct.⁶⁴

The delays which were built into the system of administration because the

62 P.R.O., SP16/443/30, 30 Jan. 1640, Smith to Pennington.

63 P.R.O., WO55/454 fos.36v-7, 22 Feb. 1627, Buckingham to Totnes, & 23 Feb. 1627, Totnes to Officers; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.7 (warrant arrived, 24 Feb.).

64 P.R.O., WO55/454 fo.81v, 24 June 1627. Two weeks earlier Buckingham also directed the Officers to provide the *Mary Rose* with an extra 2 guns. His letter was received by the Officers on 12 June, but his letter to Totnes was not written until the 14th: *ibid.*, fos.68v-9; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.19v.

Admiralty directed its warrants to the Master of the Ordnance rather than to the Officers were exacerbated in the 1620s by the slowness with which Totnes forwarded Buckingham's warrants to Tower Hill. At the outbreak of war in 1625 Totnes, who was seventy years old, apparently suffered a mild stroke. During the summer of 1626 he retired to his house at Nonsuch, where the fresh air and exercise did him good. Nevertheless, he was understandably reluctant to risk a relapse through overwork. It might have been better, therefore, if Totnes had chosen to surrender his post to a younger, healthier man, although, had he done so, he would not have been entitled to a pension. Instead, he merely decided to take things easy, for as he told his friend Sir Thomas Roe in October, 'I meane not to overcharge my spiritts wth publique Affayres'.⁶⁵ Unfortunately for the Navy, Totnes evidently meant what he said. Four weeks earlier a warrant to munition three naval pinnaces took five days to travel between Nonsuch and the Tower, a delay which probably helps to explain why these vessels were prevented from joining Lord Willoughby fleet before it sailed.⁶⁶ The following summer Totnes proved even slower in passing on instructions to his subordinates. A Privy Council warrant to munition the *Happy Entrance* dated 31 July 1627 took no less than twelve days to reach the Ordnance Office thanks to Totnes.⁶⁷ This might have had serious consequences had the Officers not responded so promptly. According to their own delivery records, they managed to supply the ship within five days of receiving their instructions, which was two days before Joshua Downing expected her

65 P.R.O., SP16/37/25, 4 Oct. 1626.

66 P.R.O., W055/454 fo.25, 1 Sept. 1626, Totnes to Officers; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS., 429 fo.3v, received 6 Sept. 1626.

67 A.P.C. 1627, p.468; Brit. Libr. Harl. MS. 429 fo.22v, received 11 Aug. 1627.

to be ready to put to sea.⁶⁸

It seems clear that, during 1626 and 1627, Totnes proved to be a millstone round the necks of his subordinates, whose efficiency was jeopardised by the Earl's inertia. Nevertheless, the Ordnance Officers themselves may have served to compound the tardiness of Totnes on at least one occasion. On 31 August 1627 the Privy Council instructed Totnes to prepare the *St. George*, which was then at Portsmouth, for immediate service.⁶⁹ Although the Earl evidently composed his own warrant to the Officers four days later, it did not reach the Tower until 10 September.⁷⁰ The Office delivery book asserts that stores were delivered to the ship on the 18th. However, this cannot be true, for it was not until 20 September that the Officers arranged for her supplies to be transported by cart.⁷¹ Thus, it must have taken at least a month to deliver the ship's munitions whereas it might have taken just two and a half weeks.

The Navy's reliance on the Ordnance Office for its guns and munitions was undoubtedly an administrative weakness. However, it was a deficiency for which the Office itself could not be held responsible and which it could do little or nothing to remedy. This was not the only institutional problem which lay beyond the Officers' control. Like any of the other spending departments, the Office required an adequate supply of money to function properly. It was often shortage of money, rather than foot-dragging or incompetence, which caused delays.

The problems experienced in June 1629 by the captain of the *Dreadnought*,

68 P.R.O., WO55/1643 fo.132, delivery, 16 Aug. 1627; P.R.O., SP16/73/62, 9 Aug. 1627, Downing to Nicholas. Downing thought the ship would be ready to put to sea on Saturday week, which was the 18th: see C.R. Cheney, *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History*, (London, 1978), p.91. 69 A.P.C. 1627, p.510.

70 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.25v.

71 P.R.O., WO55/1643 fo.139; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.27.

Richard Plumleigh, demonstrate this point neatly. Plumleigh twice complained to Edward Nicholas that the munitions for his ship had not arrived.⁷² Nicholas duly approached the Surveyor of the Ordnance, Sir Paul Harris, who promised to furnish the ship within four days if the Lord Treasurer would assign the necessary money.⁷³ The following day Harris wrote an apologetic letter to Nicholas in which he explained that he had unsuccessfully attempted to buttonhole Weston, that the Privy Council clerk who had drawn up the appropriate warrant had so worded it that Weston's signature was indispensable, and that it would be necessary to get the Earl of Dorset, who was an Admiralty Commissioner, to alter it that afternoon.⁷⁴ How Harris overcame the bureaucratic and financial obstacles in his way is not clear, but three days later he raced off to Portsmouth with one of his clerks, apparently to oversee the delivery of *Dreadnought's* stores himself.⁷⁵ Two days later, Plumleigh acknowledged receipt of his munitions.⁷⁶ True to his word, Harris had managed to see to the delivery of munitions within four days of receiving financial satisfaction, or five at the most, an accomplishment which does not smack of lethargy.

Financial problems probably also lay at the root of the Ordnance Office's failure to munition the eleven vessels of the Channel and Irish squadrons in 1630 more quickly. On 15 December 1629 the Ordnance Officers had assured

72 P.R.O., SP16/144/44,56, 5 & 9 June 1629 respectively.

73 P.R.O., SP16/145/15, 19 June 1629, Harris to Nicholas. Harris' response to Nicholas must have been slightly delayed, however, because he spent 2 days in prison (17-19 June 1629) for stealing gunpowder, for which see below, p.326.

74 P.R.O., SP16/145/19, 20 June 1629, Harris to Nicholas.

75 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS., 429 fo.61v, (23 June 1629).

76 P.R.O., SP16/145/52, 25 June 1629, Plumleigh to Nicholas. The Ordnance Office delivery book spuriously claims that Plumleigh's munitions were delivered on 14 June. Even if it is assumed that this is supposed to represent the date on which the stores were issued from the Tower rather than the date of their arrival at Portsmouth, this must still be seen as incorrect: P.R.O., WO55/1643 fo.214v.

the Admiralty that they could furnish the ships within five days of receiving authorisation.⁷⁷ However, in making this rash promise they must have assumed that money would be provided to pay for the stores, for the Office's finances were in turmoil. The major problem was the department's wartime debt, which amounted to around £20,000. The bulk of this was not eradicated until December 1630, when lands worth £1,000 a year were ordered to be transferred to the Lieutenant, Sir John Heydon.⁷⁸ A further factor which contributed to the Office's financial problems were internal disagreements concerning its methods of book-keeping. By May 1630 the Ordinary account was eighteen months in arrears as a result, and 'all ye Officers servants and Creditors doe suffer'.⁷⁹ It was against this background that the money needed to pay for the ships in 1630 was slow to materialise. Although the Admiralty ordered the Ordnance Officers to munition the ships on 3 February, it was not until 18 March that all the ships were completely furnished.⁸⁰ This contrasted with the efforts of the Navy Board, which had supplied the ships with its stores by 10 March.⁸¹ The close correlation between the Office's record of its own delivery dates, and the Exchequer's record of the dates on which it issued money to the department, clearly demonstrates the Office's dependence on ready cash to meet its obligations. Thus the first batch of munitions was delivered to two pinnaces on 16 February, the day before Sir John Heydon received £144

77 P.R.O., SP16/117 fo.107v.

78 P.R.O., LR9/62/1, n.f., 16 Dec. 1630, Weston to Clerks of the Pipe & Revenue Auditors.

79 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.73v. Two months later the Lord Treasurer was solicited to make speedy payment of £720 to various labourers & suppliers: P.R.O., E407/13, Book of Debts, n.f.

80 The warrant does not survive. It was received by the Officers on 5 Feb. (Brit. Libr., Harl. MS., 429 fo.67v.). For the deliveries, see P.R.O., W055/1643 fos.223v-226v.

81 P.R.O., SP16/162/64, 10 March 1630, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

16s 6d from the Exchequer. The second batch of deliveries, to the *Convertive* and four pinnaces, took place on 11 and 12 March. On the second of these dates Heydon obtained a further £241 19s 9d, money which also paid for the final round of deliveries which occurred on 16 and 18 March.⁸² Viewed with an eye to the Exchequer's records, then, the Ordnance Office's shortcomings in 1630 seem understandable.

As with the Navy, the basis of Ordnance Office finance was the department's Ordinary. Unlike the Navy, however, the Office Ordinary was fixed at an annual rate of £6,000. This was a small sum, a consideration which perhaps should have favoured regular funding. However, whereas the Navy's much larger Ordinary suffered from occasional late payments during the 1630s, the Ordnance Office Ordinary was in a permanent state of disarray. A memorandum of about 1633 put the arrears of the Ordinary at £16,400, and by February 1636 this had crept up to around seventeen or eighteen thousand pounds.⁸³ Throughout the 1630s the Exchequer never actually issued a single penny on the Office's current account. In Easter term 1635, for example, money was paid to the Ordnance Office in part payment of the Ordinaries of 1628 and 1630-3, but there were no issues for that year's needs.⁸⁴

Not surprisingly, the surviving records betray the symptoms of a mounting crisis. In June 1632 Sir Henry Palmer complained of 'the great defect & want of all manner of provisions whereby to give intertaynement in the Navy upon any Com[m]mand or Warrant, and especially of Gunners provis-

82 P.R.O., E403/1741, n.f.

83 P.R.O., SP16/206/27, n.d., miscalendared 1631, internal evidence suggests 1633; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.156v. On 30 July 1635 the Exchequer put Office arrears at £17,543: Harl. MS. 3796 fo.28.

84 P.R.O., E405/284 fo.148. The general point for the years 1632-5 is established from *ibid.*, fos.7v,52v,76,95v,120v-121. For 1636-40, see E405/285 fos.7v,36,62v-63,136v,146; E405/286 p.5; E405/287 fo.8v; P.R.O., T34/5 fo.6.

ions'.⁸⁵ Eleven months later the Ordnance Office was inundated with demands from naval gunners for a fresh supply of their ordinary harbour provisions, which were paid for out of the Ordinary, who were told by the Officers that new stores could not be obtained without money.⁸⁶ By March 1635 the Office was warning the Admiralty that a £12,000 arrear rendered it quite impossible to provide that year's quota of stores chargeable as Ordinary. The Officers were duly ordered to attend an Admiralty meeting, but evidently nothing was done.⁸⁷ The following February they felt constrained to petition the King, who agreed to consider their demands for a settled Ordinary and the elimination of the Office's debt.⁸⁸ However, Charles did nothing, and in June the Officers renewed their petition in the form of a Remonstrance, asking for the settlement of the Ordinary 'uppon a constant and unalterable assignment'. They also complained that the stores were now 'much exhausted'. Stores were provided to be used, of course, but 'the continuall yssuing of yor Majestties provisions wthlthout any supply, either uppon services ordinary, or extraordinary, is the greatest cause that yor Magazin is thus unfurnished'.⁸⁹ It seems altogether astonishing, but it is perhaps not entirely untypical, that the King had to be tutored that it was necessary to replenish the stores from time to time.

Over and above the Ordinary, the Ordnance Office was entitled to receive additional sums whenever extraordinary services were set afoot. However, the extraordinary account was frequently in just as much of a shambles as the Ordinary. Between 1635 and 1640 the Office's extraordinary naval expenses were largely met out of Ship Money, which was paid direct to the

85 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.101.

86 *Ibid.*, fo.110.

87 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.377v.

88 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.156v.

89 Two copies of the Remonstrance are known to survive: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 30,070 & P.R.O., SP16/325/77,77.1, of which the former is the Ordnance Office copy.

Navy's Treasurer. However, the Office found that it was often at the bottom of the Treasurer's list of priorities. Six weeks before the Third Ship Money Fleet was due to put to sea the Officers complained that they had received nothing on an estimate drawn up three and a half weeks earlier for £19,758 16s 2d which was needed to munition and gun the fleet. As a result, their contractors 'doe utterly refuse to deliver any of the Provisions'.⁹⁰ The Officers' complaint, which was lodged on 10 March, seems to have prompted an immediate reaction from Sir William Russell, who handed over nearly £3,000 to Sir John Heydon before the end of the day.⁹¹ However, this was nowhere near enough money to put things right. Unfortunately, Northumberland's enquiry into the Navy seems to have prevented Edward Nicholas from communicating the Officers' complaint to the Admiralty until 20 March. He warned that the Office would only be able to furnish stores three weeks after the receipt of money, yet, with only a month left before the fleet was due to set sail, a decision was deferred until the next Admiralty meeting.⁹² When the Admiralty Commissioners finally got round to discussing the matter on the 23rd, they conceded that the Ordnance Office had been placed last in the queue for Ship Money, and they ordered Nicholas to meet the Navy Treasurer, the Victualler and the Lieutenant of the Ordnance once every week or fortnight to see that payments for the fleet 'goe on wⁱlth an equall hand'.⁹³

Ship Money provided the Navy with an unprecedented degree of financial independence from the Exchequer. For the Ordnance Office, however, the events of March 1637 demonstrated that the department had merely exchanged

90 P.R.O., SP16/349/79, 10 March 1637, Officers to Admiralty.

91 P.R.O., E351/2278, n.f.

92 P.R.O., SP16/350/41, 20 March 1637, Nicholas' notes.

93 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.492v.

the shortcomings of the Exchequer for those of the Navy Treasurer. Only the Officers' complaint prevented a serious administrative fiasco from occurring in 1637. Two days after Russell was rebuked for neglecting the Ordnance Office, the Treasurer paid Heydon £5,000, which was followed on 31 March by a further £1,900.⁹⁴ These payments, coupled with the £3,000 Russell had already issued, seem to have stopped the rot. Although the ships of the fleet subsequently emerged from the Thames in dribs and drabs, there is no evidence to suggest that this was the fault of the Ordnance Office. Instead, the delay in putting to sea may have occurred as a result of manning difficulties.⁹⁵

Sir William Russell's apparent reluctance to disburse Ship Money to the Ordnance Office forced the department to sail perilously close to the wind. However, even after he had been chastised, Russell evidently failed to learn his lesson. On 13 April he was again criticised by Nicholas because he had not paid Heydon an agreed monthly sum of £1,500, which was needed for the powder maker.⁹⁶ In order to prevent the powder mills from coming to a halt, Russell was obliged to disburse £1,800 of the money in his hands six days later.⁹⁷ The following year it was the same story. The Office submitted a list of arrears payable by Russell, including more than £1,394 for two ships 'of wihilch not one penny yet received'.⁹⁸

During the war years of the 1620s, as throughout much of the 1630s, the finances of the Ordnance Office always seemed to be on the point of collapse. Yet, surprisingly, the Office muddled through most of the time.

94 P.R.O., E351/2278, n.f.

95 On the slow departure of the ships, see P.R.O., SP16/355/22, 2 May 1637, Pennington to [Carteret?]. On the fleet's manning difficulties, see SP16/349/37,121; SP16/351/49,60; SP16/352/46,51.

96 C.S.P.D. 1636-7, p.566.

97 P.R.O., E351/2278, n.f.

98 P.R.O., SP16/400/134, n.d.

Shortly after he received a letter from Buckingham ordering him to furnish the stores needed to put four vessels to sea for three months in March 1628, the Earl of Totnes complained to the Privy Council that he had received no order for the money to pay for any of them.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, ten days later his department delivered the requisite stores.¹⁰⁰ The previous year, Totnes' subordinates performed the considerable feat of furnishing Buckingham's expedition to Ré out of little more than thin air. Writing to the King on 1 June 1627, Sir William Heydon explained that, although he had been assigned £23,000 out of the monies raised by the sale of French prize goods to pay for the expedition, he had not received a single penny.¹⁰¹ However, as the Office's own debenture and delivery books demonstrate, the mere promise of money had sufficed to induce the Office's contractors to supply the necessary stores. It was thus something of a disaster for the Office's creditors that in August the Privy Council, which was desperately searching for sources of money to pay and resupply Buckingham's army, exploited Heydon's death the previous month by suspending the Office's assignments on the prizes until Heydon's accounts were examined. Instead, £8,000 of this money was ordered to be used towards payment of the wages of Buckingham's troops.¹⁰² The government's poverty made this treatment of its suppliers inevitable, and in at least one case during the war years an important contractor was reduced to mortgaging his estate to survive.¹⁰³

99 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.34, (5 March, Officers receive letters from Totnes & Buckingham); P.R.O., SP16/95/81, 13 March 1628, Totnes to Privy Council. 100 P.R.O., WO55/1643 fos.148-9, (21 & 23 March).

101 P.R.O., SP16/66/2, 1 June 1627.

102 P.R.O., SP16/75/9, 25 Aug. 1627, Coke to Conway; *A.P.C. 1627*, p.502, 27 Aug. 1627; P.R.O., SP16/75/40, 29 Aug. 1627, Coke to Conway.

103 The contractor was the gunfounder John Browne: see University of London, Goldsmiths' MS. 195, ii. fo.18, 30 Nov. 1626, Browne to Revenue Commission. Browne may have mortgaged his estate to Sir Francis Nethersole, whom he subsequently authorised to receive money due to him: P.R.O.30/37/3 pp.17,303; P.R.O., AO15/4, pp.145-8.

Just as there were factors beyond the control of the Ordnance Office which sometimes compromised its ability to provide an adequate service to the Navy, so too it could be argued that there were other factors within its control which served to limit its efficiency. Professor Aylmer has drawn attention to the department's 'violent internal feuds', most notably the hostility between Sir John Heydon and the rest of his colleagues.¹⁰⁴ However, it remains to be established whether this quarrel had any serious impact on the gunning and munitioning of the Navy's ships.

It was perhaps inevitable that the Officers' disagreements would cause some reverberations in the Navy. On 7 March 1635 the long-suffering Capt. Plumleigh requested that the Officers be ordered to hasten the delivery of his gunner's stores, which should have arrived seven days earlier.¹⁰⁵ They had been given plenty of time to provide these munitions, having been in possession of an Admiralty warrant since 12 January.¹⁰⁶ Instead, they had spent much of the first half of February in court pursuing their dispute with each other.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, it would probably be a mistake to exaggerate the amount of disruption caused by litigation. On being told to prepare the ships of the First Ship Money Fleet for sea by 25 April, the Officers evidently suspended their legal activity. Indeed, it was not until 25 April that they appeared in court again. When they did so, Heydon evidently sought and obtained a further two weeks to examine his witnesses.¹⁰⁸ The reason for this is unclear, but it seems very likely that it was to finish supplying the fleet, for although the Officers had almost managed to meet the deadline, there were still a few ships to be furnished

104 Aylmer, 'Attempts at Administrative Reform', p.242.

105 P.R.O., SP16/284/38.

106 C.S.P.D. 1634-5, pp.455-6; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fos.130v-1.

107 P.R.O., E125/16, fos.334v,352v-3,356v; E125/17, fos.58v-9.

108 C.S.P.D. 1634-5, p.584; P.R.O., E125/18 fo.18v.

with their guns and munitions.¹⁰⁹ Clearly, the Officers were not so irresponsible that they allowed their internal squabbles to interfere with the major task of equipping the fleet.

Although the dispute between Heydon and his colleagues evidently had little immediate bearing on the gunning and munitioning of the Navy's ships, it could be argued that the issues at stake, which involved the quality of Ordnance Office administration, were directly relevant to the Navy. Yet it is far from clear to what extent Heydon's charges against his fellow Officers, many of which were technically correct, really revealed shortcomings that were prejudicial to the conduct of naval operations.

The essence of Heydon's case was that the other Officers had perverted the financial procedures of the Office, probably with a view to lining their own pockets. One of the most striking pieces of malpractice to which he drew attention was the Officers' disregard for the set level of the Ordinary. The Ordinary was supposedly fixed at £6,000 a year, but they had consistently overspent this amount by many thousands of pounds.¹¹⁰ This charge was one of a number which was investigated and confirmed by the Privy Council clerk, William Boswell.¹¹¹ Moreover, the Officers themselves freely admitted that Heydon was correct. However, they denied that they had behaved in a corrupt manner. Rather than bother to obtain extraordinary Privy Seals to sanction excess expenditure, they had simply chosen to overspend on the Ordinary. This could actually be construed as sound administrative practice, for it reduced the need for additional paperwork. Indeed, the Officers claimed that Lord Treasurer Portland had earlier

109 P.R.O., SP16/287/52, 26 April 1635, Ordnance Office report. Only 3 out of 19 ships lacked either some of their guns or stores.

110 P.R.O., SP16/179/59, n.d.

111 P.R.O., SP16/531/124, n.d.

registered his approval, presumably for this reason.¹¹² Thus, a practice which Heydon regarded as corrupt ought probably to be viewed as nothing more than administrative convenience.

If Heydon drew the wrong conclusion from his subordinates' attitude towards the Ordinary, so too he may have unjustly censured the high prices paid by his department for its goods. Heydon pointed out that the Office often paid more than a third, a half or even double the market rate, a finding which was confirmed by Boswell.¹¹³ Compared with the Navy, for example, the Ordnance Office paid a high price for its cordage. In 1627 and 1628 the Navy generally paid £26 13s 4d per ton for ready made cordage.¹¹⁴ By contrast, in 1627 the Ordnance Office increased its rates to its supplier, John Fletcher, from £26 to £28 the ton.¹¹⁵ The following year prices even reached £32 per ton.¹¹⁶ However, the reason for these increases is to be found in an anonymous, undated manuscript.¹¹⁷ Ironically, its author also deplored the excessive rates which had been paid to Fletcher and other contractors. According to this document, Fletcher explained that he had demanded such high rates because he had been forced to wait so long for payment. The anonymous writer evidently regarded this excuse as inadequate, and so, presumably, did Heydon. However, given the deplorable condition of the Ordnance Office's finances it is difficult to see why. The Ordnance Office was not a charitable institution, and if it obliged its contractors to wait for long periods of time before settling its debts it

112 P.R.O., SP16/206/26, n.d.

113 P.R.O., SP16/179/59, n.d.

114 P.R.O., SP16/62/92, estimate for 4 ships, 8 May 1627; A.P.C. 1627-8, p.190, 19 Dec. 1627; Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.65, estimate for 1628.

115 £26 the ton: P.R.O., WO49/58 fos.22,28,33,57,84v,148v; £28 the ton: *ibid.*, fos.101v,170v,185v,253v; P.R.O.30/37/3, pp.281,290,293,301,311.

116 P.R.O.30/37/3, pp.16,39,269.

117 P.R.O., SP16/179/47.

could expect to pay for the privilege. If Sir John Heydon really thought this was reprehensible then he was living in cloud-cuckoo land.

Heydon's motives in attacking his colleagues are worth considering. It may be, of course, that he was genuinely concerned to eliminate financial irregularities in the Ordnance Office. But it seems that he had a financial interest in portraying his colleagues as corrupt. For they accused Heydon of waging a private vendetta against them because he had been unable to accept that his brother, the former Lieutenant who had been drowned at Ré, had died indebted to the Crown to the tune of £8,268. Indeed, they tacitly accused Heydon of attempting to cheat the Crown by inflating the Office's debt in order to recover the money owed by his late brother, for which he was personally liable.¹¹⁸ Regrettably, it is not possible to establish whether this was indeed Heydon's intention. But the Officers' claim is not implausible. For this reason the accusations levelled by the Lieutenant need to be treated with caution at the very least.

Yet it would be a mistake to regard Heydon's colleagues as above reproach. Evidence independent of Heydon's charges suggests that two of the Officers and one of their clerks were indeed corrupt. In June 1629 the Surveyor Sir Paul Harris and the Storekeeper Thomas Powell were imprisoned on the Privy Council's order for two days after they had conveyed no less than 144 barrels of powder out of the stores without authorisation.¹¹⁹ The following September the Council ordered Powell's clerk, Robert Bevis, to explain why another consignment of powder had been delivered to one John Davis without a warrant.¹²⁰ However, these offences may have been only the tip of the iceberg. According to detailed evidence collected by William

118 P.R.O., SP16/206/26, n.d.; SP16/214/69.I, 27 March 1632, Officers to the King.

119 A.P.C. 1629-30, pp.52,58,80-1.

120 *Ibid.*, p.143.

Barroway, who like Bevis worked as a clerk for the Storekeeper, Harris, Powell and Bevis habitually spirited away small quantities of government stores for their own benefit.¹²¹ The impact of such malpractice on the Navy is difficult to calculate. However, it seems unlikely that it was significant. The ill-effects of Harris and Powell's abortive attempt to embezzle twelve dozen barrels of powder in June 1629 were probably what gave the game away. The day before the Council ordered the arrest of Harris and Powell, Capt. James Bamford informed the Admiralty that his pinnace had received only eighteen barrels of powder rather than the twenty-two to which it was entitled.¹²² Theft on such a large scale was doomed to failure because it was so obvious.

It was not altogether surprising that some men had their fingers in the till. Like many naval officials, Office employees frequently subsidised their jobs. In 1636 three of the Officers wrote to the Earl of Newport in support of one of their colleagues, the Clerk of the Deliveries, George Clarke. Clarke's official annual fee, which he received from both the Exchequer and his own department, amounted to just £104 15s. This was supposed to pay, not only Clarke's salary, but also his travelling expenses and the cost of a house. 'Wee verily beleive', wrote the other Officers, that 'his Ma[ajes]t[ie]s said services hath occasioned such extraordinary expence as his said Ent[er]t[ain]m[en]t doth not defrey'.¹²³ Three years later Sir John Heydon petitioned the King because he claimed that the cost

121 P.R.O., WO55/1777 fo.43r-v. Barroway's motives in compiling this report are a mystery. They may be connected with his evident dissatisfaction with his official allowance: Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.189v.

122 P.R.O., SP16/531/38, 16 June [1629], (miscalendared 1630), Bamford & 2 others to Admiralty. On Bamford, who ironically was sacked a short time later on grounds of misconduct, see above, p.158.

123 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.166, 21 May 1636, Francis Coningsby, Edward Sherborne & Richard March to the Earl of Newport.

of fulfilling the duties of his place 'much exceeded the entertainment'.¹²⁴

One way of recovering money laid out in this way without cheating the King was to charge high fees to the Office's suppliers. There is considerable evidence to suggest that, in the 1630s at least, the Officers did precisely this. In 1639, for instance, the Gunmakers' Company claimed that fifty shillings was deducted from every £100 they received in payment by Sir John Heydon's clerk, Howard Strachey. If they refused to pay such a high rate, they added, Strachey would 'make us wait severall daies before whee can receive our monyes'.¹²⁵ The Officers themselves denied extorting large fees from suppliers, claiming that such fees as they received were given voluntarily.¹²⁶ However, the level of fees was sufficiently high by the late 1630s to force up the cost of firearms to the Crown.¹²⁷

The Officers intended that their fees should augment their meagre wages, but income derived from this source may never have been enough to make up the shortfall between what they earned and what they were forced to spend. The background to Sir Paul Harris' career perhaps provides the perfect illustration. He had bought the Surveyorship in 1627 from the widow of the previous incumbent at the instigation of Buckingham on the promise that he would receive further preferment for doing so. He claimed that he had been forced to borrow the £1,500 this had cost him. The Duke's untimely death in 1628, coupled with the fact that Harris had not been paid a penny of his

124 P.R.O., SP16/354/38, 20 April 1637.

125 P.R.O., SP16/438/33, n.d., quoted in Mark Charles Fissel, 'Bellum Episcopale: The Bishops' Wars and the End of the "Personal Rule" in England, 1638-1640' (2 vols., University of California, Berkeley, 1983, unpublished Ph.D.), i. 135.

126 P.R.O., SP16/441/11, 2 Jan. 1640, Coningsby to [Ordnance Commissioners]; SP16/441/12, 2 Jan. 1640, Sherburne to [Ordnance Commissioners]; SP16/441/13, 2 Jan. 1640, March to [Ordnance Commissioners].

127 Fissel, 'Bellum Episcopale', i. 113-14.

wages for at least two years, may have proved the last straw.¹²⁸ Although he possessed a substantial landed estate, Harris evidently saw no reason why he should not claw back some of the money he had fruitlessly expended in buying his post. It is difficult not to sympathise with his plight.¹²⁹

There were remarkably few complaints about the quality of the naval stores provided by the Ordnance Office. One anonymous writer accused John Fletcher of having furnished the Navy with 'rotten stuff' which its gunners 'utterly refused', and the gunfounder John Browne of having provided defective shot.¹³⁰ However, if these accusations were correct then one might reasonably expect to find some supportive evidence among the very large surviving correspondence of naval captains with the Admiralty. In fact, there is very little evidence to suggest that the Office provided the Navy with sub-standard stores. The only complaint which was brought to the attention of the Admiralty concerning the quality of any of the Navy's guns was lodged in 1636, when it was claimed that the muskets provided the previous year had been bad '& the bullets not all of a size'.¹³¹ There were no complaints about the quality of powder, except William Barroway's allegation that twenty lasts which had been proofed in 1625 were of poor quality 'but notwithstanding all passed for Currant and good'.¹³² The only defect which appears to have been endemic concerned the quality of the gun carriages made by the Office. In 1639 the Ordnance Officers recalled that Attorney-General Noy, who had been instructed to investigate the Office ten years earlier, had affirmed that the reason for the rapid decay

128 P.R.O., SP16/155/42, n.d., 1629-30. Harris had determined to sell his place by 1630, & had enlisted the support of Secretary Coke:

SP16/161/64, 28 Feb. 1630, Coke to Dorchester.

129 For a hostile view of Harris, see G.E. Aylmer *The King's Servants: The Civil Service of Charles I, 1625-1642* (2nd edn., London & Boston, 1974), p.288.

130 P.R.O., SP16/179/47, n.d.

131 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.427.

132 P.R.O., W055/1777, fo.4v.

of carriages and platforms in the royal forts was the 'unseasonable felling, and too suddaine employment of such Tymber'.¹³³ The problem evidently extended to naval gun carriages as well, for in December 1628 sixty carriages which had been used in the fleet that year were so decayed that they were broken up for fuel.¹³⁴

In fact, the Ordnance Office may have been more concerned with the quality of its stores than it has sometimes been given credit for. It was particularly worried about its gun carriages. In April 1635 the Surveyor, Capt. Francis Coningsby, and the Master Gunner of England, John Reynolds, surveyed a number of new carriages, many of which they refused to accept. Nevertheless, they were forced to take delivery of the rest, even though they knew them to be 'soe shaken and warpt after they were bound' that they feared that 'they will not doe the service yt is expected'.¹³⁵ The reason for this lay in the fact that the magazine had been allowed to run down to the point that the Office was unable to provide carriages made of seasoned timber. This was not the fault of the Officers, for their department was starved of the funds it needed to resupply the stores. On the contrary, in February 1635 it was they who urged the King to order the fresh felling of timber to replenish stocks.¹³⁶ Unfortunately, Charles took no notice, and a month later the Officers repeated their petition, to no avail.¹³⁷ In the face of such intractability there was little the Officers could do.¹³⁸

133 P.R.O., SP16/433/37, 25 Nov. 1639, Officers to a Privy Council committee. Noy was instructed to investigate the Office in July 1629, together with the Solicitor-General: *A.P.C.* 1629-30, p.80. Their report is not known to survive. 134 P.R.O., W055/1643, fo.188.

135 P.R.O., SP16/287/47, 25 April 1635.

136 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.134, 16 Feb. 1635, Newport, Heydon & Morice to the King.

137 P.R.O., SP16/284/70, 13 March 1635, Newport, Heydon, Coningsby & Clarke to the King.

138 Perhaps all that they could have done was to have accepted the recommendation of the Commissioners who had investigated the Office in

In a recent book on the Ordnance Office of the later seventeenth century, Dr. Howard Tomlinson has described the department as 'only a cog in a very large administrative machine'.¹³⁹ This description might, with equal justification, be applied to its predecessor in the period before the Civil War. It is true that the Caroline Ordnance Office occasionally demonstrated signs of administrative ineptness. In particular, the decision of an aged and infirm Master to continue in his place at a crucial moment in the second half of the 1620s caused unnecessary delays and provided additional administrative problems for his already overworked subordinates. However, there were also occasions, most notably in its munitioning of Buckingham's fleet in 1627, when the performance of the Office was almost exemplary. Moreover, there are sound reasons for concluding that, when the Office did perform badly, this owed more to understaffing, financial constraints and occasional Admiralty blunders than to the inertia or incompetence of its officials. It was sheer bad luck that two of the Office's employees, the labourer Henry Gotobed and the lighterman Henry Careless, possessed surnames indicative of sloth and incapacity.¹⁴⁰ In view of the many problems which it faced, what is most striking about the Ordnance Office under Charles I is not that it sometimes functioned inadequately, but that it managed to function at all.

1619, which was that the Navy should assume responsibility for manufacturing its own gun carriages: Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 36777 fo.8.

139 H.C. Tomlinson *Guns and Government: The Ordnance Office under the Later Stuarts* (London, 1979), p.147.

140 The Office continued to attract men with unfortunate surnames. In the later 17th century the Hull storekeeper was named William Idell: *ibid.*, p.98.

Chapter 8

THE SEAWORTHINESS OF THE KING'S SHIPS

The Caroline Navy is often said to have failed to meet even minimum standards in its equipment and provisions. 'Rotten biscuits and meat, foul beer and water, unserviceable guns and tools, rotten rigging and cordage, and faulty timbers', wrote Professor Aylmer, 'meant miserable, half starved and sick men, and ships which were seldom seaworthy, let alone fit for battle'.¹ The quality of naval victuals and the efforts of the Ordnance Office have already been considered. However, it remains to be seen whether these remarks about the seaworthiness of the King's ships are sound. The conclusions reached here will say something about the adequacy of pre-Civil War English seapower in general, and about the efficiency of the Navy's yards in particular.

I. Hulls

No wooden warship during the age of sail was likely to be completely watertight. This is a truism, but one worth emphasising when considering what could reasonably be expected of early seventeenth-century shipwrights, given the skills, tools and materials available. Describing the immense amount of attention lavished on ship hulls by the Spanish Navy of the same era, Professor Phillips has concluded that 'even when everything was done properly, leakage was still a major problem on most ships; that is why pumps were a standard part of their equipment'.² In

¹ Aylmer, 'Attempts at Administrative Reform', p.239.

² Carla Rahn Phillips, *Six Galleons for the King of Spain: Imperial Defense in the Early Seventeenth Century* (London & Baltimore, 1986), p.56.

England at least, the necessarily imperfect condition in which ships put to sea coloured the very definition of the word 'leaky'. The first ever seaman's dictionary, compiled towards the end of James I's reign by Sir Henry Mainwaring, made a point of differentiating between mere seepage, which was acceptable, and leakage, which was not. 'We say a ship is leaky', wrote Mainwaring, 'when she makes more water than is ordinary, which is some hundred strokes in twenty-four or forty-eight hours'.³ It is a telling reminder of the limitations of the time that it was a matter of some pride to Secretary Coke in October 1625 that one ship in Sir Edward Cecil's fleet was so watertight that she took in just three inches of water in twenty-four hours.⁴

Leakiness, when it occurred, did not necessarily infer dockyard negligence. Ironically, the cause might actually lie in the nature of the materials used to prevent leaks. A ship's hull was sealed from flooding by driving oakum into her seams.⁵ If the oakum was allowed to dry out, however, it would contract. A period of dry, hot weather in the summer of 1629 caused the caulking of the Navy's ships at Portsmouth to shrink so dramatically 'y^t all raynes that fall upon them ether wⁱlthin bord or wⁱlthout goeth throught [*sic*] the seames', a state of affairs which prompted the shipwright Edward Boate to urge their immediate repair⁶. Just as oakum might shrink when exposed to dryness and heat, so too it might expand if it was wetted when freshly applied. The discovery of a leak in the *Victory* in April 1627, which was then

3 *The Life and Works of Sir Henry Mainwaring*, II. 177.

4 Brit. Lib., Add. MS. 64884 fo.124, 6 Oct. 1625, Coke to Buckingham.

5 *Life and Works of Sir Henry Mainwaring*, II. 122. Oakum applied to the seams below the waterline was evidently less coarse than oakum applied to the seams above it: Brit. Lib., Harl. MS., 1649A fo.154v.

6 Brit. Lib., Add. MSS., uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C160/3), 24 June 1629, Boate to Admiralty.

preparing to put to sea, was attributed to the dryness of a seam. It was correctly thought that this would rectify itself 'upon a little soaking', although this took two days to happen, during which time it was idly speculated that the leak might have been caused by shoddy workmanship.⁷

The Navy's ships inevitably suffered from leaks. However, this was no excuse for dockyard negligence. The most extreme consequence of careless maintenance or repair was the loss of a ship at sea. Between 1624 and 1642 the Navy lost thirteen ships, including two prizes. Five at least were sunk due to crew error. The largest was the *Anne Royal*, which capsized in the Thames in 1636 while preparing to sail for the Downs. In the immediate aftermath of the incident her master and pilot reputedly alleged that she had keeled over after springing a leak.⁸ Later, however, the Navy's Surveyor was at pains to point out that the ship had been holed by her own anchor, having been moored in dangerously shallow water.⁹ Of the remaining eight ships, six sank in foul weather, five of them on the return from La Rochelle in November 1628, and two off the western coast of Scotland in May 1640.¹⁰ Only one warship, the *Fifth Whelp*, sank in calm seas.¹¹

7 P.R.O., SP16/60/40, 17 April 1627, Mainwaring to Buckingham; SP16/60/54, 18 April 1627, Mainwaring to Nicholas; SP16/60/67, Mainwaring to Buckingham. A leak in the *White Bear* in 1588 also 'stopt of yt self': P.R.O., SP12/212/61, 17 July 1588, Hawkins to Burghley. I am grateful to Prof. Russell for this reference.

8 P.R.O., C115/N4/8583, 22 April 1636, Reade to Scudamore. The other 4 vessels were the *Speedwell* (wrecked in 1624 through pilot error), the *Seventh Whelp* (accidently blown up, 1630), *Fourth Whelp* (wrecked through pilot error, 1636), & the *Roebuck* (sunk in a collision, 1641).

9 P.R.O., SP16/287/73, 14 June 1636, Edisbury to Nicholas; SP16/330/39, 15 Aug. 1636, Edisbury to Nicholas.

10 The 5 vessels lost in 1628 were the *Desire*, *Sixth Whelp*, *Fly*, *Esperance* & *Katherine*. The 2 vessels lost off the Scottish coast in 1640 were the *Ninth Whelp* & the *Confidence*.

11 See below, pp.343-5.

The Navy was perhaps fortunate to lose only one ship as a direct result of her unseaworthy condition. In December 1636 Sir Henry Mervyn reported that the *Third Whelp* had been driven from her anchors in Dover Road by strong winds and was 'in some danger by reason of a leake shee hathe had ever since shee came from Portsmouth w^hilch encreasd uppon her 12 or 14 inches everie watche'.¹² Two months later Mervyn had his own ship, the *Garland*, searched for a leak. Some of the damage which was uncovered had been caused by the same stormy weather which had driven the Whelp off her station, but 'the carpenter, in boring the stemme...found the Mayne stemme so rotten that it is verillie beleived that if shee should come to fowle weather at sea all would give waye and hazard the losse bothe of the shippe and companie'.¹³

Very few ships were ever in such a distressing state as Mervyn's flagship; nevertheless, many others put to sea in a poor condition. In 1625 Capt. Sir Francis Stewart complained twice in the space of three months that his ship, the *Red Lion*, was leaky. On the first occasion the ship sprang a leak on leaving Chatham dock.¹⁴ The *Rainbow* was similarly afflicted at the same time. In May Capt. Sir John Chudleigh reported that she was 'somewhat leaky'.¹⁵ Like the *Constant Reformation*, which had sprung a leak the previous year, the ship had served in the Algiers expedition of 1620-1, and may have been suffering from the after effects.¹⁶ The lower hulls of the ships of this fleet had been sheathed with a layer of tar and hair overlaid by thin boards to protect them

12 P.R.O., SP16/338/9, 27 Dec. 1636.

13 P.R.O., SP16/346/84, 10 Feb. 1637, Mervyn to Admiralty; SP16/347/17, 15 Feb. 1637, Mervyn to Admiralty.

14 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.108, 30 May 1625, Stewart to Coke; P.R.O., SP16/5/77, 25 Aug. 1625, Coke to Buckingham.

15 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64883 fo.86, 22 May 1625, Chudleigh to Coke.

16 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64881 fo.139, 20 July 1624, Goddard to Coke.

protect them from the seaworm *teredo navalis*, which bred in southern waters.¹⁷ On the *Rainbow*'s return to England, this sheathing had evidently been removed. Although the seaworm did not inhabit the colder waters of the Channel, this was a mistake, as Chudleigh realised.¹⁸ The need for ships to retain their sheathing was spelled out more than seventy years later by the shipwrights at Chatham. It was not unusual for vessels whose sheathing had been removed to prove leaky, they remarked, since 'the exactest caulking of such ships which have been so wounded comes often short of the numerous small perforations which nails make'.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the dockyard workforce at Chatham appears to have overlooked this rather obvious point in 1625.

Many contemporaries believed that the fleet which sailed to Cadiz had left England in an appalling condition. This belief was seemingly borne out by the state of the *Rainbow*, which continued to experience problems. In response to Chudleigh's complaints, the ship was partially sheathed at Plymouth before sailing for Spain. However, more than four months later she was in a worse condition than before. She returned home before most of the rest of the fleet because her pump could not cope with a leak that had forced the crew to resort to bailing out water by hand.²⁰ Many other ships were in almost as desperate a condition on the return journey to England. The captain of the fleet's flagship, Sir Thomas Love, deplored the leakiness of many of the ships, 'especially the king's', while the soldier Sir George Blundell made no bones about his

17 On sheathing, see *Life and Works of Sir Henry Mainwaring*, 11. 222. On the worm, see Sir Richard Hawkyns' description in *Select Naval Documents*, ed. H.W. Hodges & E.A. Hughes, (Cambridge, 1922) p.9.
18 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64884 fo.23, 30 June 1625, Chudleigh to Coke.
19 *The Sergison Papers* N.R.S., lxxxix (1949), ed. R.D. Merriman, pp.110-1, 29 Sept. 1698, shipwrights to Sir Edward Gregory.
20 P.R.O., SP16/9/39, 9 Nov. 1625, Cecil to Buckingham.

opinion that he thought that the naval administration had wilfully permitted leaky, rotten vessels to put to sea.²¹

However, at least one captain was guilty of exaggerating the condition of his ship in 1625. In a council of war held four days before the fleet arrived off Cadiz, Capt. Sir Beverley Newcome alleged that the *Dreadnought* was utterly unserviceable. Yet, later the same day, members of his crew sent Cecil a certificate which, while emphasising that the ship was defective, concluded that she was still fit for service. She was subsequently inspected by specially appointed commissioners, who found her 'staunch and serviceable'. This finding deserves to be credited, because it was these selfsame commissioners who recommended to Cecil that the *Rainbow* should return to England.²² More than ten years later another captain falsely complained that his ship was unseaworthy for reasons precisely opposite to Newcome's. This was Capt. Peter Lindsey, who was said by his purser to have alleged that his pinnace was leaky because he thought that he stood a better chance of obtaining the command of a greater ship the following spring if he went to Court.²³

Perhaps the most important factor in explaining the condition of the Cadiz fleet on its homeward journey was the storm which it encountered five days after it left England. Stormy weather was the severest test of seaworthiness, and ships were not always able to resist the battering of wind and waves. Atrocious weather alone may sufficiently explain why Cecil's flagship, the *Anne Royal*, proved so leaky that the crew was forced to work knee deep in water, although Cecil himself seems not to

21 P.R.O., SP16/12/2, 17 Dec. 1625, Capt. Love to Buckingham; SP16/9/15, 3 Nov. 1625, Blundell to Buckingham.

22 *The Voyage to Cadiz*, pp.27,29,76,103.

23 P.R.O., SP16/311/13, 3 Jan. 1636, Brissenden to Nicholas.

have thought so.²⁴ In view of the vile weather, perhaps what is most remarkable is not that many of the ships proved leaky, but that they remained serviceable for so long. Towards the end of the seventeenth century Sir Cloudesley Shovel declared that an admiral who kept his fleet out after October deserved to be shot.²⁵ Yet, of the nine King's ships which served in the 1625 expedition, only the *Anne Royal* experienced real difficulties before reaching Cadiz. Even the *Rainbow* seems not to have been seriously distressed until the end of October.²⁶ Ultimately, it is impossible to be sure that the damage sustained by Cecil's fleet was really attributable to dockyard negligence; it may simply have been caused by sending ships to sea in autumn weather.

Yet storm damage will not explain why the *Red Lion* was crippled by a leak before the fleet left England. Two weeks after the ship was withdrawn from service, one newsletter writer assured his reader that her seams were 'unkaulked in some places a yard together & no okam'.²⁷ Such speculation was fuelled by the ship's earlier mishaps, and by the fact that the Master Shipwright, William Burrell, assumed that his assistant, Henry Goddard, had not overseen her repair in dry dock carefully enough. In fact, these explanations were false. Obligated to moor in shallow water in Plymouth harbour in order to avoid fouling the cables of some Dutch vessels, the ship had actually holed herself on her own anchor '& fel so leake that her wel filled above a foote in an hour'.²⁸ Burrell's willingness to blame Goddard for the calamity which befell the *Red Lion* was, in reality, a symptom of a feud between the two

24 P.R.O., SP16/9/30, 8 Nov. 1625, Cecil to Buckingham.

25 J.S. Corbett, *The Successors of Drake*, (London, 1900), p.437.

26 *Voyage to Cadiz*, p.76.

27 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 389 fo.498, 19 Oct. 1625, Mead to Stuteville.

28 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64884 fo.124, 6 Oct. 1625, Coke to Buckingham.

men. Between 1619 and 1628, Burrell had overall responsibility for ship repair at Chatham. However, he was also an active Navy Commissioner, which meant that he was obliged to delegate much of his work to Goddard. During the early 1620s Goddard fired off a couple of letters to Coke complaining that, although he did all the work, Burrell took all the credit while refusing to take any of the blame.²⁹ Nevertheless, it is not impossible that the rivalry between the two men did affect the quality of ship repair. In October 1625 the senior administrator at Chatham yard, Joshua Downing, observed that differences between the Master Shipwrights and their Assistants bred 'faction & carelesnes in the workmen'.³⁰ Moreover, sometime during the early 1620s the Assistant Master Shipwright, Edward Boate, trimmed two ships at Portsmouth which had recently come from dry dock at Chatham, but which he later said appeared to have been hardly 'medled wthall'.³¹

The quality of service provided by Burrell was criticised twice within the space of six weeks in the autumn of 1627. Two of the warships earmarked to convoy reinforcements to Buckingham's army at the Ile de Ré were prevented from sailing due to their unseaworthy condition. The first ship to prove unfit to sail was the *Convertive*. According to Sir Henry Mervyn, Burrell had known well in advance that the ship was leaky. However, he had allegedly considered it to be 'no matter', for 'shee was well enough to serve a 2 months voyage'.³² The second ship was the *St. Andrew*, which sprang 'so greate a leake...that in 4 glasis [glasses] wee

29 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64878 fos.17-8, 18 Sept. 1622; Add. MS. 64881 fo.62r-v, 9 Feb. 1624.

30 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64885 fo.136v, 27 Oct. 1625, Downing to Coke.

31 Brit. Libr., uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C101/6), n.d., except 'September 10'.

32 P.R.O., SP16/86/49.I, 6 Dec. 1627, Sir Thomas Button to Buckingham.

increast 36 inchis...& the chaines of my pompe so bad that in 4 howers they broke 5 tymes'. Pleading forgiveness for his enforced stay in England, her captain urged Buckingham 'to lay the blame of it wheare it is p[ro]lper, that is on Mr Burrell'.³³ Yet it is difficult to believe that Burrell, who was one of the most active and conscientious of the Navy Commissioners, was really guilty of gross negligence. In September and October 1627 the Navy's efforts were bent towards the relief of Buckingham's army at Ré as quickly as possible. It is therefore arguable that ships which under more normal circumstances would have been certified as unfit to sail were given a clean bill of health. The ill-condition of the *St. Andrew* and the *Convertive* was probably the consequence of political necessity rather than dockyard negligence.

Political considerations undoubtedly explain why Lord Willoughby was permitted to put to sea with a fleet which was scarcely seaworthy in October 1626. Three warships, including two armed merchantmen, were discharged even before the fleet set sail, while a further ten were reported to be leaky on the eve of their departure.³⁴ The final blow to the fleet, however, was dealt by a storm in the Bay of Biscay, which damaged the remaining ships and led to the abandonment of the expedition. In the immediate aftermath of this fiasco Buckingham professed to be shocked to learn that the King's ships had proved to be more unseaworthy than the merchantmen. He therefore asked the Privy

33 P.R.O., SP16/79/66, 30 Sept. 1627, Mervyn to Nicholas (endorsed 30 Oct. by Nicholas, perhaps correctly); SP16/82/88, 25 Oct. 1627, Capt. Bond to Nicholas; SP16/82/89, 25 Oct. 1627, Mervyn to Nicholas.

34 P.R.O., SP16/37/19, 3 Oct. 1626, Willoughby to Buckingham; SP16/37/20, 3 Oct. 1626, Willoughby to Conway; SP16/37/29, 5 Oct. 1626, Willoughby to Pennington; SP16/37/30, 5 Oct. 1626, Willoughby to Pennington; SP16/37/31, 6 Oct. 1626, Willoughby to Buckingham; SP16/37/32, 6 Oct. 1626, Denbigh to Buckingham.

Council to establish a commission to ascertain why Willoughby's ships had 'proved so defective as that they were not able to endure a storme'.³⁵ However, this was little more than a shabby attempt to shift the blame from his own shoulders to those of his subordinates. For the cause of the disaster was all too clear. The fleet had put to sea even though the collapse of the 1626 Parliament meant that the government had not the means to ensure that it weighed anchor in a seaworthy state.

The dockyards may not have been entirely free from blame for the deplorable condition of Willoughby's ships. This is suggested by a report concerning the *Vanguard*, which was forced to withdraw from the fleet after it was discovered that her sheathing was decayed and that she was 'okum sick betwene her planckes'. Although sheathing needed to be replaced at least once every seven years, or else it served to mask rotten oakum and decayed nails, the *Vanguard's* had evidently been applied more than seven years earlier.³⁶ As the ship had also seen active service in 1625, when she had been loaned to the French, this seems remarkable.

Unfortunately, the treatment of the *Vanguard* may not have been an isolated example of neglect. In 1636 the *Assurance* was forced to return to port after she began to leak badly. Subsequent dry-docking revealed that the nails in her sheathing were loose, and that the oakum underneath was rotten. The most startling revelation, however, was that

35 A.P.C. 1626, p.350. Buckingham had earlier instructed Willoughby & his flag officers to inspect each ship to determine who was to blame (Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 37816 fo.175, 21 Oct. 1626, Buckingham to Willoughby). Willoughby merely carried out a survey, however (P.R.O., SP16/38/40-2, damage reports, 22 Oct. 1626).

36 P.R.O., SP16/37/31.II, 5 Oct. 1626, Capt. Watts & others to the fleet's council of war. On the 7 year rule, see below, note 38. See also *Sergison Papers*, pp.112-3, 24 Oct. 1698, Elias Waff & Joseph Allin to Navy Board.

her sheathing had not been replaced in twenty-five years.³⁷ This was an appalling omission, which was made worse by the fact that the Navy's Surveyor, Kenrick Edisbury, had been advised by a number of Thames shipwrights in 1634 that all those ships which had been sheathed for more than seven years should have their sheathing 'wholy taken off, and the same new dubd and spild and calked'.³⁸ In the aftermath of the affair involving the *Assurance*, Edisbury seems to have kept quiet about this letter. Suggestively, it is one of only a handful of naval documents which are to be found among his private papers in north Wales rather than among the naval MSS. in the Public Record Office.

The *Assurance* was only one of a number of ships of the Second Ship Money Fleet which proved to be in an unseaworthy condition. No less than a third of the vessels under Northumberland's command in 1636 sprang a serious leak. It was no wonder that the Earl opined that the problem 'must proceed from some negligence'.³⁹ Perhaps only in the case of the *Mary Rose*, whose pump had worked so effectively that it had 'sucked the Ocum out of the Seames', were the dockyards not entirely to blame.⁴⁰ Captain Burley of the *Fifth Whelp* spoke of a leak in his ship of quite glaring proportions. Despite having come straight from the yards, the *Whelp* had proved so leaky that she had been forced to put into Plymouth. On inspecting her hull 'it was found that the seams were so open that a man might thrust his hand all along them'.⁴¹ Despite this, the Navy Board insisted that the leaks suffered throughout the fleet had been

37 P.R.O., SP16/319/60, 28 April 1636, Edisbury to Coke.

38 Clwyd Record Office, D/E/1321, 9 Sept. 1634, shipwrights to [Edisbury]. I am grateful to Dr. John Adamson for drawing my attention to the Edisbury papers at Clwyd.

39 P.R.O., SP16/338/39, n.d., Northumberland's complaints, art. 3.

40 P.R.O., SP16/319/33, 23 April 1636, Edisbury to Admiralty.

41 P.R.O., SP16/336/74, 30 Nov. 1636, Burley's deposition.

impossible to detect in advance:

The cause hereof is presupposed to be in ye negligence of the caulkers, which we have made strickt inquirie into, and for ought wee can be informed...most or all of those leakes grew from such defects in ye ships as the narrowest observation could not prevent; as in the *Marirose*, though upon complaint twice caulked, yet till shee came into ye docke the leak could not possiblief be found, and then by the issuing of the water it was discerned by her keele iust under the Well, and the hole not bigg enough to put a man's little finger into, which till so discovered the witt of man could not foresee or prevent; but yet it hath occasioned a strickter oversight of ye caulkers and carpenters.⁴²

There was obviously something to be said for this line of defence, for the yards could not always be expected to find every imperfection in a ship's hull. However, there were simply too many leaky ships in 1636 for this excuse to sound completely convincing. It was therefore undoubtedly a correct verdict when in March 1637 the King and the Admiralty pronounced that the Navy Board had been negligent.⁴³

A few months later the *Fifth Whelp* sank off the Dutch coast shortly after a storm. This seems to suggest that the Navy Board failed to improve dockyard standards in time to prevent a tragedy. This view was certainly held by Northumberland, who canvassed the opinions of some of his subordinates and communicated what he learned to the Admiralty. Able men, he remarked, interpreted the fact that the Whelp had sunk only four hours after springing a leak as evidence of dockyard negligence.

Moreover, one captain who had contemplated commanding the Whelp had discovered prior to sailing that little had been done to amend the defects exposed the previous year, 'or at leastwise not so much as he expected'.⁴⁴ This revelation was all the more damning in view of the

42 P.R.O., SP16/349/99, 13 March 1637, Officers' reply to Northumberland's articles. 43 P.R.O., SP16/350/7, 16 March 1637.

44 W.S.R.O., Leconfield MS., HMC 36, n.f., 13 Aug. 1637, Northumberland to Admiralty.

fact that two of the Principal Officers had told the Admiralty in February 1637 that the only Whelp which was defective was the *Tenth*.⁴⁵ The only official who seems to have sounded a warning bell in advance was the Master Shipwright, Edward Boate. Writing to Edward Nicholas at the beginning of March, he criticised the Admiralty's decision to commission the *Fifth* and *Tenth* Whelps for active service when there were two other, newly repaired Whelps available instead. However, Boate placed all his emphasis on the *Tenth Whelp*, which was in such a poor state that 'shee can hardly be made fitt against ye time limited this service'; he made no similarly explicit observations about the *Fifth Whelp*.⁴⁶ Thus the Admiralty, which subsequently decided to omit the *Tenth Whelp* from the fleet list, was not sufficiently acquainted with the extent of the *Fifth Whelp*'s shortcomings, with tragic consequences.

The Principal Officers blamed the loss of the *Fifth Whelp* on the quality of her construction. All ten of the Lion's Whelps, they alleged, had been built quickly in 1628 from 'meane sapple tymber' in order to provide the fleet with a number of small oared vessels to help break the French King's blockade of La Rochelle.⁴⁷ This was undoubtedly true. The incidence of leakiness among the Whelps in the nine years since their construction was disproportionately high, 'w^hilch occasioned his Majestties extraordinarie charge to maintayne them thus longe'.⁴⁸ Viewed in this way, there was probably very little that could have been

45 P.R.O., SP16/346/80, 10 Feb. 1637, Edisbury & Fleming to Admiralty.

46 P.R.O., SP16/349/19, 2 March 1637.

47 P.R.O., SP16/365/17, 3 Aug. 1637, Russell & Edisbury to Admiralty.

48 In Dec. 1630 the *Tenth Whelp* grew leaky after just 8 hours at sea: P.R.O., SP16/176/17. For similar incidents involving the *Second Whelp* (May 1630) & *Ninth Whelp* (May 1633), see SP16/167/16 & P.R.O., SP63/254/36. Both Mervyn & Pennington complained about the state of the Whelps, & assumed that the dockyards were to blame: SP16/303/78, 78.1-II, 79; SP16/338/9.

done to make the *Fifth Whelp* more seaworthy. However, the inherent unseaworthiness of the Whelps was no excuse for the calamity which befell the *Fifth Whelp*. Even if it was impossible to shore up a pinnacle which had been built of green timber, this did not absolve the Navy Board of the need to alert the Admiralty to the problem in advance.

There would seem to be plenty of evidence that there was something fundamentally wrong with the dockyards in the 1630s. Yet, while such major illustrations of dockyard ineptitude as the sinking of the *Fifth Whelp* cannot be lightly brushed aside, a large number of ships nevertheless enjoyed an untroubled time at sea. Apart from the *Fifth Whelp*, only one other vessel of the twenty-eight strong Third Ship Money Fleet, the *Nicodemus*, proved unseaworthy.⁴⁹ The length of time some warships were at sea made it inevitable that some ships would leak. The case of the *Happy Entrance*, which only began to take on water in 1626 after nine months at sea, is a case in point. Until then, the crew had not needed to man the pumps 'sometymes in 4 or 5 weekes'.⁵⁰

In view of the age of many of the Navy's ships, it is perhaps surprising that there were not more complaints about leakiness than were in fact reported. Even the most competent dockyard workforce would have been hard pressed to make many of these vessels seaworthy. The Navy's oldest ship was the *Adventure*, which had last been rebuilt in 1594, and was described in 1638 as 'old, leaky and rotten'.⁵¹ Such longevity was

49 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64902 fo.151v, 15 July 1637, Northumberland to [Coke]. However, 2 ships of the Winter Guard, the *Garland* & the *Greyhound*, were sent in for repairs in February & October that year. For the *Garland*, see above, p.335. For the *Greyhound*, see P.R.O., SP16/369/91, SP16/370/32.

50 P.R.O., SP16/18/39, 12 Jan. 1626, Palmer to Nicholas.

51 P.R.O., SP16/401/76, 14 Nov. 1638, Thomas Smith to Pennington. Contemporaries calculated the age of ships from when they were last rebuilt rather than from their date of construction. For the age of

by no means unusual in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Between 1625 and 1640 only three elderly capital ships, the *White Bear*, *Warspite* and *Anne Royal*, were discarded, while just three others, the *Vanguard*, *Red Lion* and *Prince Royal*, were rebuilt. This was despite the fact that in 1624 William Burrell had advocated the gradual rebuilding and replacement of the Navy's oldest ships, a proposal echoed by the Principal Officers in a letter to the Admiralty in May 1636.⁵² Many old warships were commissioned time and again, and it was understandable if a captain had reservations about the seaworthiness of such vessels. Prior to the sailing of the Second Ship Money Fleet, Pennington allegedly told friends that he feared that he would not bring back his flagship, the *Anne Royal*, 'because shee was soe old and rotten'.⁵³

The predominant view in the Navy's administration was that it was possible to patch up old ships to an acceptable standard. In 1624 two of the Navy Commissioners opined that 'even old...ships by good calking, & by some strengthening...may bee made fitt for service'.⁵⁴ Ten years later the Navy's Master Shipwrights assured the Principal Officers that four old ships were 'everie waile able ships for any service upon our owne coast' because they had been regularly repaired in dry dock.⁵⁵ There was probably some truth in this view. To take one example, the thirty-three year old *Nonsuch*, which had been dry-docked in 1635, proved to be watertight in 1636, unlike many other old ships, such as the

the *Adventure*, & other ships, see P.R.O., SP16/237/69, 30 April 1633, ship survey.

52 P.R.O., SP14/161/68, March ? 1624, Burrell's Proposition.

53 Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 7000 fo.358, 13 April 1636, Rossingham to Puckering. I am grateful to Sabrina Baron for this reference. The *Anne Royal* had last been rebuilt in 1609.

54 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64881 fo.168, 6 Aug. 1624, Coke & Gofton to Burrell & Norreys.

55 P.R.O., SP16/282/78, 22 Jan. 1635, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

Assurance, Adventure and Due Repulse.⁵⁶ Perhaps the clearest evidence that there was no necessary correlation between the age of a ship and her seaworthiness is to be found in a letter by Lord Howard of Effingham to Burghley in March 1588 concerning the Queen's ship the *Elizabeth Bonaventure*. Before she set sail, it had been feared that the *Elizabeth*, which was then as old as the *Anne Royal* in 1636, needed to be dry-docked. Yet, although she subsequently struck a sandbank where a month earlier a ship had been wrecked, Howard proudly reported that 'in all this tyme theare never came sponfull of water in her well', and he added, 'my Lo[r]d, except a ship had bene made of Iron it weare to be thought impossible to doe as she hath done...she is 27 yeares ould..and there hath bene noe voyage whilch hath bene but she hath bene one'.⁵⁷

Yet the prevalent view among the Navy's administrators - that old ships could always be made serviceable - was ultimately flawed. Sooner or later, they became so rotten that it was simply too difficult and too costly to carry out further repairs. Unfortunately, such ships were sometimes put to sea. In March 1631 the Navy's Comptroller warned that the prize ship *St. Claude* was so old that 'after this she will never be able to make an other voyage withoute extraordinarie repaires'.⁵⁸ Even this assessment may have been too optimistic. Eight months later, the ship's captain reported that his vessel had sprung a leak 'yt cannot be come att to be made thite', and that part of the gunwale was decayed.⁵⁹ Sir Henry Mainwaring expressed the sentiments of many of his fellow

56 For evidence that the *Nonsuch* had been dry-docked, see P.R.O., SP16/311/19.

57 P.R.O., SP12/209/9, 9 March 1588. I am grateful to Prof. Russell for this reference.

58 P.R.O., SP16/186/33, 5 March 1631, Slingsby to Dorchester.

59 P.R.O., SP16/203/1, 2 Nov. 1631, Kettleby to Admiralty.

captains in 1636 when he advised the Admiralty 'to build new ships in the room of the old that are decayed, rather than to patch them up'.⁶⁰ This would unquestionably have been the wiser course, for old ships were potentially dangerous and unserviceable. However, this would have required a massive injection of funds, of which there was never any real prospect in the 1630s. The result was that, by 1641, no less than twelve of the Navy's ships were so rotten that they were unseaworthy.⁶¹

It is difficult to generalise about the Navy's ability to put its ships to sea in a watertight condition. Many ships undoubtedly left port in an unsatisfactory state. However, in some cases this was probably because politicians were more interested in getting the ships to sea than in the condition in which they sailed. Although appalling blunders were sometimes made, not least in dealing with sheathing, mistakes were inevitable. The real problem here is whether the Caroline Navy fared better or worse in this respect than anyone else. The absence of comparative data means that it is currently impossible to test any hypothesis. For this reason alone, it seems advisable to record an open verdict.

II. Masts and Yards

Buoyancy was a precondition of seaworthiness, but so too was the state of a ship's masts and yards. Masts which cracked or snapped because they were rotten might cripple a ship as assuredly as any leak. According to Professor Baugh, during the mid-eighteenth century the Navy's ships sprang their masts 'at an alarming rate'.⁶² By comparison, between 1625

60 *The Life and Works of Sir Henry Mainwaring*, 1. 248.

61 For a discussion of this subject, see above, pp.170-2.

62 Daniel A. Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, 1965), pp.277-8.

1635 only eleven ships are known to have put to sea with defective masts or yards, an average of just one vessel a year. Even if many instances may went unreported, this hardly bespeaks a serious problem.

This statistic nevertheless disguises a rash of incidents which occurred in 1633. No less than four warships out of the six which saw service that summer were afflicted with rotten or defective masts. In the *Ninth Whelp*, for instance, the mainmast was described by the ship's captain as 'a deseightfull tree' which, although repaired, remained 'hevie and distrustful'.⁶³ An irate Pennington understandably blamed the dockyards for this catalogue of disaster. However, this was without real justification. The cause of the problem that year lay in events abroad.

The Navy was largely dependent for its supply of masts on Polish Prussia, for it was generally only from there that trees of a sufficient length could be found. However, in 1626 the Swedish army under Gustavus Adolphus invaded Prussia, and seized a number of key ports, most notably Danzig.⁶⁴ The effects of the invasion were immediately felt by the Navy. In December 1626 the Special Navy Commissioners resolved to send to Amsterdam for masts, 'there being noe meanes to have them out of Prussia'.⁶⁵ The Navy also turned to Norway, but Norwegian masts were generally of poor quality, and their supply was never enough to meet the Navy's requirements.⁶⁶ By February 1628 the demand for masts was so acute that Buckingham ordered a cargo of captured masts to be

63 P.R.O., SP63/254/36, 29 May 1633, Capt. James to Nicholas. The other 3 ships affected were the *Vanguard*, the *Henrietta Maria* & the *Eighth Whelp*: SP16/243/37, 27 July 1633, Pennington to Nicholas.

64 Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years' War* (London & New York, 1984), pp.122-3.

65 P.R.O., SP16/45 fo.23.

66 For the purchase of Norwegian masts, see Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649A fo.117. On their quality in general, see P.R.O., SP16/363/68.II, n.d., Russell to Admiralty, received 12 July 1637. The best masts were Prussian & Swedish ('sprucia and sweethis').

appropriated for the Navy.⁶⁷ However, this unexpected windfall may not even have provided for immediate needs. In March Sir Henry Mainwaring told Buckingham that he had only supplied the *Nonsuch* with a new mainmast by borrowing the *Rainbow's* foremast. Mainwaring assured the Duke that the ship 'will go little the worse', although he conceded that the jury mast was 'short and somewhat unsightly'.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the Navy could not rely indefinitely upon such expedients to mast its ships. The Navy Commissioners therefore urged Buckingham to allow a mast-dealer named Stiles to buy a prize ship with which to attempt to resume trading with Prussia.⁶⁹ For its part, the government sought to persuade the Swedes to allow English merchants to export naval stores without hindrance.⁷⁰

The Truce of Altmark, which signalled the cessation of hostilities between Sweden and Poland in September 1629, did not solve the Navy's problems, for the Swedes retained the right to levy tolls on the Polish ports. Moreover, ten months later, Gustavus Adolphus invaded northern Germany. In the spring of 1630 William Burrell and Phineas Pett observed that there were few naval supplies 'whereof there is more need then mastes'.⁷¹ Once more, the Navy was forced to look beyond the Baltic for

67 P.R.O., SP16/93/29, 14 Feb. 1628, Buckingham to Navy Commissioners. In addition, the Navy Commissioners successfully urged Buckingham to order 34 masts owned by the Ordnance Office which had been used at Ré to be handed over to them: SP16/91/48, 24 Jan. 1628, Navy Commissioners to Nicholas; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 429 fo.36.

68 P.R.O., SP16/96/11, 16 March 1628. The sight of such a stumpy mainmast was considered to be a 'disparagement' by many sailors: SP16/98/81, 30 March 1628, Carew to Buckingham.

69 P.R.O., SP16/93/45, 15 Feb. 1628.

70 P.R.O., SP95/3 fo.6, 27 March 1628, [Cokel] to Sir James Spence. The Swedes, however, were evidently only prepared to relax trade restrictions in exchange for diplomatic & military assistance in shoring up the flagging Danish war effort: *ibid.*, fo.17, 12 June (Old Style) 1628, Gustavus Adolphus to Charles I.

71 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64900 fo.129, 31 May 1630, letter to Coke.

its supply of masts, to Norway and perhaps also to Scotland.⁷² However, despite these alternative sources of supply, the Navy's reserves had run out by the end of 1632. In November Phineas Pett explained that the launch of two new ships had been delayed because 'there were noe Masts to be gotten fitte for them till the last Norway shippes were Arryved'.⁷³ Early the following year an estimate for replenishing the stores included the cost of 286 masts of between six and twenty-two hands 'whereof there are none in store'.⁷⁴ There appears to have been a marginal improvement by the spring of 1633, for a survey of the contents of Chatham and Deptford mastyards listed fifty-eight serviceable masts.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, this was a pitifully small reserve for a fleet of nearly forty ships and pinnaces.

The crisis in the supply of masts, which reached its height in 1632, explains why the ships commissioned in 1633 put to sea with rotten masts. The Swedish military adventures of the 1620s and 1630s exposed the vulnerability of England's dependence on the Baltic for important naval stores. It was no wonder that the government was involved in mediating a peace between Poland and Sweden in 1629. Receiving his instructions in June, the special ambassador appointed to help bring about a cessation of hostilities, Sir Thomas Roe, was reminded that peace would permit 'the opening of the trade of Danzig and other ports adjoining which are shut up by reason of that war'.⁷⁶ Alongside these

72 P.R.O., IND1/6748, n.f., 8 March 1632, grant to Portland;
P.R.O., C115/M35/8416, 3 Nov. 1632, Pory to Scudamore.

73 P.R.O., SP16/225/63, received 26 Nov. 1632, Pett to [Nicholas].

74 P.R.O., SP16/256/14, n.d.

75 P.R.O., SP16/233/84 (Chatham); SP16/236/85 (Deptford).

76 J.K. Fedorowicz *England's Baltic Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century: A Study in Anglo-Polish Commercial Diplomacy* (Cambridge, 1980), p.191.

efforts to bring about peace, the Caroline regime seemed prepared, for a short while, to resort to force to protect the essential supply of Baltic stores. A small squadron under Pennington was readied to assist the Dutch and the Danes in the blockade of the Elbe.⁷⁷ In the event, these ships were not sent, for Denmark came to terms with the Emperor. It was not until England's naval power was massively increased in the 1650s that it proved possible to resort to independent naval action to secure the lifeline with the Baltic.⁷⁸

The Navy's difficulties with its masts were not simply restricted to problems of supply. In 1636 Capt. William Rainsborough alleged that the masts of many of the ships of the Second Ship Money Fleet were elderly and rotten, and had been tarred over to make them look sound.⁷⁹ The Navy Board, however, pointed out that masts were always surveyed before they were bought, and those which were obviously faulty were always refused. They added that if any masts were inwardly defective 'our care cannot prevent it'. This was a fair point, for dockyard officials did not possess x-ray vision. The Board also correctly asserted that the problem of defective masts and yards had been exaggerated in 1636. Only the *Due Repulse*, which spent a rotten mainyard, was so badly affected that she was forced to return to port.⁸⁰

The Navy Board was not indifferent to the quality of a ship's masts. It is illustrative of their concern that the Principal Officers, who were later censured by Coke for their generally poor administration,

77 P.R.O., SP104/170 (Secretary Dorchester's letterbook), pp.32-3, instructions for Roe, n.d.

78 Capp, *Cromwell's Navy*, pp.106-111.

79 P.R.O., SP16/337/1, 1 Dec. 1636.

80 For the Officers' defence, see P.R.O., SP16/349/99; on the *Repulse*, see SP16/336/75, [Nov. 1636], Capt. Kirke's deposition.

ensured that the *Adventure* was properly refitted in 1629. In December 1628 her mainmast had been damaged at sea. Her captain did his best to mend the mast, but it remained untrustworthy.⁸¹ The Admiralty was not initially informed that the mast was thought to need replacing, however. Hence, they merely ordered it to be repaired. This was not good enough for the Principal Officers, who persuaded the Admiralty to instruct the *Adventure* to be fitted with a new mainmast.⁸²

In the 1620s the interests of one of the most prominent members of the Navy Board, William Burrell, may have been too closely linked with those of the Navy's mast suppliers. The evidence for this is derived from the testimony of the mastmaker Edward Chandler, which was obtained by the Special Navy Commissioners in May 1627. Chandler alleged that the masts he had been ordered to fit to the *Mary Rose* were unsound, and that, although he had alerted Burrell, he had been ignored. Consequently, the foremast had split when the ship sailed from Chatham in 1625.⁸³ However, Chandler's testimony is impossible to verify. All that can be said in support of his allegation is that Burrell admitted that he was partnered with a mast dealer named Moorer. He maintained that he had informed his fellow Navy Commissioners of his association with Moorer, and that he had obtained their approval before purchasing Moorer's masts. Moreover, he alleged that his partnership was motivated by a desire to obtain masts more cheaply for the Navy, for they were expensive.⁸⁴ It is

81 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 9297 fo.106, 9 Jan. 1629, Mennes to Principal Officers; P.R.O., SP16/132/3, 9 Jan. 1629, Mennes to Admiralty.

82 P.R.O., SP16/132/61, 23 Jan. 1629, Slingsby & Fleming to Nicholas; SP16/156 fo.12v, record of a letter sent by the Admiralty to Mervyn to order the ship to be fitted with a new mainmast, n.d. The ship's captain seemingly had second thoughts about the need for a new mast: SP16/135/24, 9 Feb. 1629, Mennes to Nicholas.

83 P.R.O., SP16/45 fos.97-8, 9 May 1627.

84 Brit. Libr., Add. MSS., uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C173/3,

difficult to believe that Burrell was as devoid of self-interest as he claimed. Nevertheless, there is no proof that his irregular business connection actually prejudiced the quality of the masts which he bought.

In conclusion, it would seem that the Navy suffered from two main problems in relation to its masts. One was immutable, the other was not. First, there was the constant difficulty of selecting sound trees. Secondly, there was the disruption caused to the main source of supply by Sweden's entry into the Thirty Years' War. Yet the Navy's ships seem to have been surprisingly well-masted as a rule. Only in 1633 did this prove not to be the case, and this was scarcely the Navy's fault.

III. Cordage

It is beyond dispute that large quantities of cordage provided for the Second Ship Money Fleet were unsatisfactory. The warrant officers of the *James* allegedly considered their rope such 'as no master in a merchant's ship would use', while Capt. Brett of the *Assurance* described his ship's cordage as 'very bad, and far short of such as hath been known in the king's ships in other voyages'.⁸⁵ Captain Rainsborough admitted that the fleet's cables and standing ropes had been good, but he complained that the running ropes had been 'as bad as ever I saw used in ships'.⁸⁶ Rainsborough's preparedness to praise as well as to condemn confers upon his testimony an especial credibility. Significantly, the Navy Board did not dismiss these complaints out of hand. Rather, it sought to have each proven in detail.⁸⁷ Clearly, there was a case to answer.

p.7). Coke believed that Burrell was also secretly partnered with another mast dealer named Randall Crew: Brit. Libr., Add. MSS., uncatalogued, (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C162/1) n.d.

85 P.R.O., SP16/336/21, 20 Nov. 1636.

86 See above, n.79.

87 P.R.O., SP16/349/99.

On the face of it, the Navy took adequate precautions to prevent the use of sub-standard cordage. Rope manufactured at Chatham and Woolwich was supervised by a clerk at both yards. It is true that the Navy failed to oversee any outside ropemakers it might employ. But it is demonstrative of a keen interest in such things that in 1634 the Admiralty demanded to know whether the private ropemaker John Fletcher was permitted to make cordage in the open air.⁸⁸

The Navy was never able to manufacture all its own cordage, either in its own yards or in those of private ropemakers. Before 1635 at least, it bought large quantities of ready-made rope from private merchants. Although it was styled 'Russian', much of it also came from northern Poland.⁸⁹ Imported cordage was always inspected and tested before purchase, and any which was considered to be sub-standard was supposed to be refused. Indeed, the Navy's care in this respect was seemingly exemplary. In February 1629 eight men were instructed to view cordage imported from the Baltic by Job and Clement Harby, of whom not less than four were needed to constitute a quorum for their proceedings. This was a sizeable body of surveyors, comprising a former naval Treasurer (Russell), his former Paymaster (Edisbury), a Master Attendant (William Cooke), a Master Shipwright and former Navy Commissioner (Burrell), and four Trinity House officials (Salmon, Case, Clarke and Best). Admittedly, this list did not include any ropemakers, but the surveyors were authorised to seek the advice of specialists if they wished.⁹⁰ This they did, for their report bore the names of four more Trinity House

88 P.R.O., SP16/475 fo.324, 18 Jan. 1634.

89 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. uncatalogued (Derb. R.O., Coke MS. C162/38, n.d., Mr. Wilson's observations concerning Russian cordage).

90 P.R.O., SP16/136/35, received 24 Feb. 1629.

officials (Hockett, Tutchin, Totten, Walter Cooke) and three master ropemakers (James, Dawes and Dons). The cordage imported by the Harbys was stored in two warehouses, one at St. Saviour's Dock and the other at Rotherhithe. Although the surveyors formed a favourable impression of the rope at St. Saviour's, they did not shirk from certifying most of the smaller cables at Rotherhithe as unserviceable. However, the surveyors were aware that they had been unable to examine every rope. This prompted them to suggest that each cable should be inspected by some masters and boatswains 'lest there may be some w^hilch we could not see lyeing under the Bulke that will not proove so sufficient as ye uppermost'.⁹¹ This advice was heeded, for by mid-April one of the original surveyors, William Cooke, had been joined by three naval boatswains (Morton, Edwards and Thomas Cooke) and the ship master Andrew Batten, who had helped to survey naval cordage in 1627. In addition, Cooke was joined by a fellow Master Attendant, Thomas Austen, together with Chatham's Clerk of the Cordage (Waller), the Clerk of Woolwich Ropeyard (Argoll) and the naval ropemakers William Lane and Herman Barnes. These new surveyors revised the findings of the earlier inspection, for they reported that some of the cordage at St. Saviours was not acceptable. They passed the remainder, but they did so with the reservation that it was well spun but 'tender' in the yarn.⁹² A further, even more detailed survey, was conducted in July.⁹³

Clearly, the Navy took great pains to ensure that the cordage it

91 P.R.O., SP16/138/81, 17 March 1629.

92 P.R.O., SP16/140/52, 13 April 1629. See also SP16/141/11, report received 18 April 1629. On Batten's involvement in the 1627 surveys, see SP16/45 fos.37,83.

93 P.R.O., SP16/147/37, 25 July 1629, Slingsby & Fleming to Admiralty (with enclosures 37.I & 37.II).

received was serviceable. Large teams of surveyors, possessing a wealth of expertise, were assembled to assess the quality of cordage, even to the extent of testing each rope separately. Rope which was found to be unserviceable was recommended to be refused. However, it is difficult to reconcile this image with the criticisms levelled during Northumberland's enquiry. The way out of this seeming *impasse* is provided by the testimonies of Sir Henry Mervyn and William Cooke in 1636.

Cooke had served as the master of Northumberland's flagship in 1636, but he was also the same man who had earlier acted as a cordage surveyor. He recollected that, as a surveyor, he had objected to some 'Russian' cordage, but he had been told that 'there was then a necessity for the King to have it'. Mervyn, too, alleged that the detrimental findings of two surveys had been set aside so as not to prejudice the acquisition of cordage priced at £20,000.⁹⁴ These allegations were effectively confirmed in March 1637, when the Navy Board admitted that defective cordage had indeed been bought 'about seven years since'.⁹⁵

The cordage survey which best accords with the Officers' reply was conducted in June 1630. Ten surveyors were instructed to inspect a large amount of cordage imported by the City Alderman Ralph Freeman according to a contract drawn up between the Lord Treasurer and Freeman in May 1629. Their findings were disturbing, for none of the cordage measured up to their standards.⁹⁶ However, in December 1630 Portland authorised a list of lands worth £1,000 to be drawn up, which were to be handed over to Freeman via the Navy Treasurer's agents, 'or soe much therof as

94 P.R.O., SP16/338/39, n.d.

95 See above, n.87.

96 P.R.O., SP16/169/55, 28 June 1630, Aylesbury & Fleming to Admiralty, with enclosed reports; SP16/170/13, 2 July 1630, Slingsby to Nicholas.

shall be requisit for the service of his Ma[ajes]t[ie]s navy'.⁹⁷ The following November, Auditors Pye and Wardour were instructed to levy a tally on Freeman for £5,555 9s 2d as if he had paid for the purchase of some land, and in turn this was ordered to be charged to the Navy Treasurer.⁹⁸ Eight days later, this sum was registered in the Exchequer as if it had been issued to Sir William Russell.⁹⁹ The following month tallies were ordered to be struck in the Exchequer which registered the transfer of various royal lands to Russell worth more than £13,545 which were intended to be handed over to Freeman.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, Freeman was paid for his rope in land, despite a damning survey.

Just as the recommendations of the cordage surveyors were set aside in 1630, so too it looks as though the same thing had happened the previous year. In April 1629 the Navy Treasurer, Sir Sackville Crowe, informed Coke that he had stopped the survey of the rope offered for sale by the Harbys because some of it was unserviceable.¹⁰¹ Yet in October 1629 and January 1630 Job Harby was assigned more than £13,553 by the Lord Treasurer.¹⁰² It seems all too likely that this money was intended to pay for Harby's rope.

The Admiralty's decision to set aside the findings of two cordage surveys demands an explanation. This was provided by the Navy Board in 1637, when it asserted that defective rope had been bought 'when no

97 P.R.O., LR9/62/1 fos.46v-7, 16 Dec. 1630, Weston to Clerks of the Pipe & Revenue Auditors. See also P.R.O., LR9/71 fo.156v, 25 May 1630, Weston to Clerks of the Pipe & Revenue Auditors; P.R.O., E401/2540, n.f., 7 Sept. 1631, receipts of tellers Pitt & Brooke.

98 P.R.O., E403/3040, n.f., 17 Nov. 1631, Weston & Cottington to Pye & Wardour.

99 P.R.O., E403/1745, n.f., 25 Nov. 1631.

100 P.R.O., E403/3040, n.f., 2 Dec. 1631, Weston & Cottington to Pye & Wardour.

101 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64899 fo.5, 11 April 1629.

102 P.R.O., SP16/166/34, list of anticipations, May 1630.

better could be had'. For it is clear that the wars waged on the southern shores of the Baltic had a profound impact on the Navy's supply of cordage, as well as its masts. No-one has charted the amount of ready-made cordage imported annually from Poland during the 1620s, but J.K. Fedorowicz has observed a marked diminution in the quantity of hemp imported during the war years. Hemp imports fell by 31% between 1625 and 1629, mainly due to the Swedish invasion of Poland in 1626, and it seems reasonable to assume that the trade in ready-made cordage was similarly reduced.¹⁰³ Faced with a dwindling source of supply, the Admiralty was thus forced to choose between buying poor quality rope and buying nothing at all.

It might be thought remarkable that England depended on the Baltic for ready-made cordage, for it was common knowledge that even the best Baltic rope was inferior to that made in the Navy's own ropehouses.¹⁰⁴ One writer attributed the cause of this to the climate in the Baltic, for 'in those colder Countries as Russia or Polonia they worke their Cordage in thicke Gloves, being not able to endure cold weather, whereby it cannot be so well performed as in a covered house wrought with naked hands'.¹⁰⁵ However, the main reason why the Navy was dependent on Baltic rope was because it could never have obtained enough hemp to manufacture all its own rope. As Edisbury told Pennington in 1633, 'if it were to save the kingdom wee cannot buy above 300 Tonns of good hemp in a yeare, though wee could focre [*sic*] all that comes over by vertue of our

103 Fedorowicz, *Baltic Trade*, pp.106-7,175,185.

104 Brit. Libr., Add. MS. 64891 fo.103, 22 May 1627, Wells to Coke; C.S.P.D. 1633-4, p.501, 13 March 1634, Admiralty to Principal Officers; P.R.O., SP16/259/11, 18 Jan. 1634, Edisbury & Fleming to Admiralty.

105 N.M.M., REC/3/270, A declaration of abuses in the provision of cordage, 1634.

Commission'.¹⁰⁶ In the early to mid-1630s there was an additional incentive for the Navy to buy ready-made rope rather than to make its own. This was that the price of imported hemp rose sharply against the cost of ready-made cordage. In 1633 the Navy Board considered that an offer by Job Harby to furnish the Navy with 400 tons of cordage at £35 the ton was reasonable, for although hemp was cheaper - at £33 or £34 the ton - the cost of turning it into cordage would increase the price by another £5 per ton.¹⁰⁷ It was so uneconomic for the Navy to make its own rope at this time that the Woolwich ropehouse was temporarily leased to the East India Company.¹⁰⁸

The purchase of Baltic cordage was thus a necessary evil for the Caroline Navy. This simple fact seems to have been recognised by the King. When he pronounced judgment on the complaints brought by Northumberland and his captains in 1636, Charles pointedly failed to single out anyone to blame for providing the fleet with defective rope.

IV. Sails

The bulk of the correspondence between the Navy's captains and the Admiralty has survived. Yet, between 1625 and 1630, only four complaints about the condition of sails are known to have been lodged.¹⁰⁹ Between 1631 and 1642 there were evidently no complaints at all. This was impressive, for as recently as 1608 it was commonly said that 'no ketch or ship upon the river of Thames has so ill sails as the king's ships

106 P.R.O., SP16/248/10, 17 Oct. 1633, Edisbury to Pennington.

107 P.R.O., SP16/234/61, 27 March 1633, Principal Officers to Admiralty.

108 P.R.O., SP16/267/57, 8 May 1634, Palmer to Nicholas.

109 For the references to 3 of these complaints, see below, notes 109 & 110. For Capt. Plumleigh's complaint of 6 May 1630, & the Navy Board's reply, see P.R.O., SP16/166/28, 57.

have'. The radical transformation in standards was not due to a change in manufacturer, for the same man - Hildebrand Prusen - made sails for both the Jacobean and Caroline navies. Instead, under Charles I, Prusen no longer provided the canvas himself, nor did he enjoy an unhealthy close relationship with a member of the Navy Board, as he had in the early Jacobean period.¹¹⁰

The few complaints which were heard in the 1620s stemmed from the fact that some ships put to sea with worn out sails. In 1625 Sir Michael Geere complained that the sails of the *St. George* were those of 'the owld *Triumphes* in the yere 88'.¹¹¹ Although Dr. McGowan has pointed out that it seems unlikely that anyone could have identified the particular ship which had previously worn the *St. George's* sails.¹¹², it does not follow that the general point that Geere was making - that the sails were too old - must have been false. If there is little reason to doubt Geere, there was even less reason to doubt Pennington, who in 1629 grumbled that three of the *Whelps* under his command were using the same suits they had been issued with when they had been built a year earlier. This sorry state of affairs was undoubtedly because the Navy was so short of money at that time that it could not afford to replace them.¹¹³

In addition to shortage of money there was also a problem of supply. Much of the Navy's need for sailcloth was satisfied by the home market,

110 For the accusations against Prusen, see *Commissions of Enquiry*, pp.95-6,114-5; Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 252 fo.20. He was evidently related to the Surveyor, Sir John Trevor. For Prusen's activities under Charles, see Brit. Libr., Harl. MS. 1649A fos.151,157v,196v, 206r-v,208.

111 P.R.O., SP16/11/49, 11 Dec. 1625, Sir Michael Geere to Wm Geere.

112 McGowan, 'The Royal Navy under Buckingham', pp.230-1.

113 P.R.O., SP16/145/2, 17 June 1629, Pennington to Admiralty. This may also explain why Button complained about the sails of the *Fifth Whelp* shortly after: SP16/151/6, 2 Nov. 1629, Button to Dorchester.

for sailcloth was produced in great quantity in and around the Ipswich area, and was consequently known as Ipswich canvas. The Navy was also obliged to import canvas from France, however, but this source was blocked by the outbreak of war with France in 1627. In 1628 the Privy Council licensed the financier Philip Burlamachi to import French canvas from the United Provinces because they had been informed by the Navy that there was a shortage of canvas with which to equip the fleet.¹¹⁴ Even after the end of the French war in 1629, the market for sailcloth remained unpredictable. In 1633 Edisbury told Nicholas that 'I find it much difficultie [*sic*] to gett in Canvas to make the Saills yt are wanting for w^hilch my Lo^rd Threr hath assigned money'.¹¹⁵ Two years later Edisbury and Fleming reported that they were finding it difficult to lay hands on enough Ipswich canvas.¹¹⁶

The small number of complaints about sails is striking because Ipswich canvas was particularly prone to mildew.¹¹⁷ Sails in store needed to be thoroughly aired if they were to be dried completely or else they were likely to rot quickly. In 1634 the Navy Board consulted Deptford's Trinity House about precisely this problem.¹¹⁸ Three years later, the Board recommended that sails should no longer be transported from the stores at Deptford to the ships at Chatham in open hoys because, after rainy weather, 'all the meanes that can bee used will not dry them'.¹¹⁹ It was perhaps because the Board was so acutely aware of the need to avoid the damage caused by mildew which explains why the Navy's ships

114 A.P.C. 1627-8, p.481.

115 P.R.O., SP16/242/31, 5 July 1633.

116 P.R.O., SP16/293/54, 7 July 1635, Edisbury & Fleming to Admiralty.

117 *Naval Miscellany*, v. 126-7, 21 Sept. 1675, John Moore & Hugh Salesbury to Navy Board.

118 T.H.D.T., no.346, p.129, 8 March 1634, Trinity House to Principal Officers.

119 P.R.O., SP16/366/32, 26 Aug. 1637.

never seem to have experienced a problem with their sails.

V. Conclusions

One historian has recently remarked that 'the dockyards specialised in producing leaky, unseaworthy vessels'.¹²⁰ There is some justice in this verdict, as we have seen. However, the Navy was a prisoner of its tools and materials, as well as a victim of its own incompetence. Wooden ships were leaky by their very nature, and careless maintenance only served to exacerbate a problem which was never less than unavoidable.

If the inherent unseaworthiness of wooden ships was a factor beyond anyone's control, so too was England's dependence for some of its most important naval supplies on France and the Baltic. In times of shortage, the Navy had to take whatever masts or cordage were to hand, regardless of quality. In 1636 this was something which Northumberland and his captains either knew nothing of, or failed to understand. Another factor which lay outside the Navy's control were the priorities dictated by political considerations, as the fate of Willoughby's expedition demonstrates all too clearly.

It is easy to be seduced by the complaint literature. Yet the majority of captains had no apparent occasion to report serious shortcomings in the fabric of their ships. Moreover, it should not be assumed from those who did that their complaints necessarily indicated a general *malaise*. The miniscule number of complaints about the Navy's sails is an object lesson in this. This is not to say that the dockyards and administrators of the Caroline Navy were never at fault. But it does mean that such failings should be seen in their proper context.

120 Lockyer, *Buckingham*, p.226.

CONCLUSION

The quality of Caroline naval administration defies adequate generalisation. One reason for this is that, while in some respects the administration was relatively sophisticated, in others it was remarkably deficient. In its insistence on regulating the time spent by the workforce in the yards, for instance, the Navy appeared to be highly sophisticated and a model of good government. Yet when it came to the impressment of mariners, most of the Navy's administrators failed to grasp the elementary point that newly acquired seamen needed to be conducted to the yards after they had been pressed. Clearly, Caroline naval administration was a curious mixture of good and bad practice, in which examples of sound management and institutionalised shortcomings coexisted.

There is an additional factor to consider. Standards varied so enormously from year to year that the historian who wishes to generalise runs the risk of seriously distorting his subject. The administrative picture is like the shifting patterns of a kaleidoscope. In view of the many changes which occurred among the Navy's administrative personnel, this is hardly surprising. The Navy Board between 1628 and 1632 provides the perfect paradigm. In 1628 a reasonably efficient, but desperately understaffed Navy Commission was replaced by a set of languid, quarrelsome Principal Officers. They in their turn were gradually replaced by Officers of a higher calibre. The result was that, by the mid-1630s, the quality of the Navy Board had reached an acceptable standard.

The reform of the Navy Board points to one area at least where it does seem fairly safe to generalise. On the whole, historians have held Caroline naval administration in low esteem. However, the notion that the

administration was irredeemably corrupt and inefficient is highly questionable. Thanks to the efforts of Sir John Coke, the Admiralty instituted a reform programme in 1631 which seems to have been largely successful. Although the reformed Navy Board was heavily criticised by Northumberland and his captains in 1636, many of the faults laid at its door were beyond the control of its members. The quality of Caroline naval administration may not have been universally good, but neither was it uniformly bad.

The same was also true of the quality of the Navy's senior administrative personnel. While the Navy was unfortunate to have attracted to its ranks men like Sir Guilford Slingsby and Sir Thomas Aylesbury, it was also fortunate to have enjoyed the services of a number of capable and dedicated officials. Perhaps the most outstanding figure was Coke. He has been described by Roger Lockyer as the Samuel Pepys of his day, and indeed the comparison is not inappropriate.¹ Like Pepys in the 1670s, Coke provided the stimulus for expanding the fleet in the 1630s. In common also with Pepys, Coke worked tremendously hard, as anyone who has read through the enormous quantity of papers which he generated can testify. Another official who shared this zeal for work was Kenrick Edisbury, the Paymaster whom Coke helped to promote to the vacant Surveyorship in 1632. Edisbury pursued his duties with such vigour that he more than made up for the indolence of his colleague, the Comptroller Sir Henry Palmer. In addition to Coke and Edisbury, the Admiralty Secretary Edward Nicholas also stands out as an exceptional servant of the Navy. Nicholas flits in and out of the preceding pages, but he might easily have merited a whole section to himself. In 1627 Nicholas made such a fine job of looking after the

¹ Lockyer, *Buckingham*, p.76.

Admiralty while Buckingham was at Ré that the Duke was said to have praised him out loud on receiving his despatches.²

One reason for the naval administration's poor reputation is the uncritical fashion in which contemporary complaint literature has often been endorsed by historians. Oppenheim in particular represented complaints as though they were necessarily correct. This was injudicious, for while many were indeed justified there were also many others which were not. For example, the charges levelled by Lord Mohun against Sir James Bagg in Star Chamber may have stemmed from little more than sheer malice. Personal animosities aside, the Navy undoubtedly had its fair share of grumblers. One of the most conspicuous offenders was Sir John Pennington. Pennington was a thoroughly capable sea commander, whose complaints were by no means always groundless, as his criticisms of the quality of the victualling service in the mid-1630s demonstrates.³ However, Pennington was fond of exaggerating the failings of the naval administration. Writing to the Marquis of Hamilton in April 1639, the Earl of Northumberland observed that Hamilton had been informed by Pennington of 'many defects in the vessells that are now to attend you'. While protesting that he would 'never goe about to excuse those that are faultie', Northumberland added that

I am so well acquainted wth Sir John Pennington's aptnesse to take up reports upon very slight informations (w^hilch when they come to be examined never prove true) that I shall intreate your Lordshipp not to give to much credite to what he tells you of this nature. In a businesse where so many persons must of necessitie be imployed, it is allmost impossible but something will be amisse.⁴

The tone of this letter perhaps reflects the depth of ill-feeling which existed between Northumberland and Pennington at that time, for the two men

2 *Ibid.*, p.372.

3 See above, pp.286-7.

4 Scot. R.O., GD406/1/1082, 13 April 1639. I am grateful to Prof. Russell for this reference.

had fallen out only five months earlier on a matter relating to the Earl's authority.⁵ Nevertheless, Northumberland's assessment of Pennington was unkindly expressed rather than unjust. Five years earlier the Admiralty Commissioners had rebuked Pennington after he had criticised Edisbury for delaying the transfer of the guns and stores of the *Unicorn*, which was unseaworthy, to the *Charles*. Edisbury had in fact acted properly in inspecting the stores aboard the *Unicorn* before they were moved, just as he had also acted correctly in issuing his warrant to the ship's Master rather than to her captain, 'as Sr John Pennington cannot but knowe'.⁶ Pennington's impatience was understandable, but his readiness to blame Edisbury for doing little more than his job was just the sort of thing which Northumberland later found so irritating.

By and large the Navy's administrators did a good job. However, even the most dedicated administrator could never entirely overcome the Navy's frequent financial difficulties. In the words of Sir Allen Apsley, without that 'earthy first moover, monny, monny, monny', nothing could be done.⁷ Yet during the war years of the 1620s the Navy was starved of adequate funds. Although many naval officials, such as Apsley, Buckingham and Bagg, dipped into their pockets to subsidise the fleet, the sums they were able to provide were never enough to make up for the deficiencies of the Exchequer. Such a chronic lack of resources meant that the government was forced to make unpalatable choices about its priorities. The almost

5 See above, p.59. Pennington felt so wounded at his treatment by Northumberland that he privately declared to Nicholas that he had resolved to resign his position 'except they use mee better, w^hilch I doe [not] looke for soe longe asome [sic] are at ye helme': P.R.O., SP16/404/119, 24 Dec. 1638.

6 P.R.O., SP16/269/32, 5 June 1634, Order of Admiralty Commissioners. The ship had then lain between Chatham & the chain at Upnor. When ships lay before the chain, their captains exercised no authority over them.

7 P.R.O., SP16/112/45, 6 Aug. 1628, Apsley to Nicholas.

inevitable upshot of this was that the lion's share of the Navy's funds was spent on equipping the fleets which were sent abroad rather than on the defence of merchant shipping in home waters.

After the cessation of hostilities in 1630 the Navy was never again so badly underfinanced. Nevertheless, naval operations during the early 1630s were sharply reduced as the Admiralty Commissioners, headed by the Lord Treasurer, endeavoured to curb expenditure. Even after the regular levy of Ship Money had resolved for the time being the question of how to pay for a sea-going fleet, the Navy continued to suffer from a lack of capital investment, a failing compounded by the King's willingness to squander precious resources on a single warship. One result of the lack of investment was that about a third of the fleet was badly in need of replacement by the outbreak of the Civil War.

The perennial shortage of money was the single-most important factor in determining the quality of the Navy's administration. So much more might have been achieved had greater and more regular financial resources been available. Yet this was something which contemporary critics were apt to forget, even if, like John Hollond, they handled the Navy's funds on a daily basis. Readers of Hollond's 1638 treatise might be forgiven for thinking that all the ills of naval administration were attributable solely to personal failings on the part of the administrators themselves. Yet, while the Navy's officials were often not beyond reproach, it is questionable whether many of them were quite as incompetent or corrupt as Hollond would have us suppose. Moreover, even the most dedicated administrator was not infallible. Hollond himself provides striking evidence that an official with the highest standards was not incapable of error. One night in 1640 he evidently bought cordage at Chatham to the

value of £130 which, on later inspection, proved to be so rotten that it was only judged fit for making into brown paper. For someone as critical of financial waste as Hollond, this must have been deeply embarrassing. Yet it was inevitable that mistakes of this kind would occur from time to time, as Northumberland appears to have recognised, for he ensured that Hollond was not made to bear the cost of the rope himself.⁸ Viewed with an eye to Caroline naval administration as a whole, this story of Hollond's brief humiliation suggests, not that the Navy suffered from a general administrative *malaise*, but rather that it experienced the sort of shortcomings and lapses from which no human institution is ever immune.

8 P.R.O., A01/1705/85 fo.5.

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